ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY

JOHN GERARD O'LEARY

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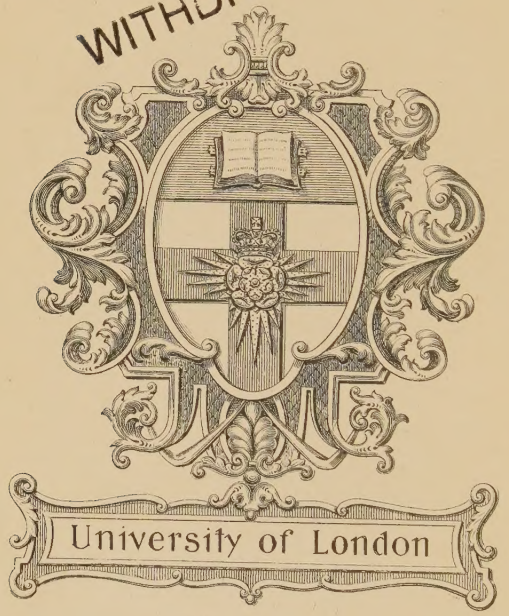

ENGLISH
LITERARY HISTORY
AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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A Thesis accepted for the Diploma of the Library Association

by

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with a Foreword by

R. A. PEDDIE

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TO

MY FATHER

"Ego a patre ita eram deductus"

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FOREWORD

It is a privilege to be allowed to introduce Mr O'Leary's work to the reader. His object has been to trace the development in the methods of writing and compiling histories and bibliographies of English literature from the earliest time to the present day. It is very largely new ground and there can be no doubt that the author has been singularly successful in his arrangement and treatment of the subject.

This branch of literary research has so far not received the attention which is its due and, indeed, without which progress in the evolution and improvement of methods of literary criticism is impossible. For there can be no true literary criticism without that substructure of knowledge of the methods of the literary historiographers of the past, from the close study of which alone can come the instinctive application of the historical method, as essential to the student of literature as it is to the student of any other branch of knowledge.

This fact, then, would render this work of the greatest value. But it is more than a mere text-book for the student. The author evinces that enthusiasm for his subject which kindles a like enthusiasm. The reader, be he scholar, student or dilettante, will find, as he is drawn further into the book, that his interest is awakened in a subject that may be almost new to him, and that a fresh point of view has been presented from which to contemplate his personal literary activities, whether these include

the formation of a library or creative literary composition or whether they are merely confined to the reading of the works of others.

After these few words of preliminary matter I can best illustrate my point by referring the reader to the book, where he may for himself realise its truth.

R. A. PEDDIE

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This little book is the outcome of some reading among the English literary historians. With the exception of an essay by Professor Elton in "Modern Studies" (to which I owe an obligation), the study of literary history, as an art, has had little attention paid to it in this country. This thesis, then, may claim to be the first account of the English literary historians. I have also attempted to show the relationship that must exist between literary history and criticism. This is really the more important aspect of the matter. The classification used for the bibliography will be quite easy to use if the schedule preceding it is studied for a minute or two. The principal divisions are the broad literary periods, each first treated generally and then by special forms of literature.

I wish to acknowledge the help I have received from the officials of various libraries, particularly of the British Museum library. Also, my best thanks are due to my friend, Miss Exley of the St Marylebone Public Libraries, who read the typescript and the proofs and whose passion for punctuating other people's remarks has been indulged in to the fullest extent.

Public Library
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ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

THE MATERIALS AND METHODS OF LITERARY HISTORY

LITERATURE is an expression of thought and emotion aroused by the aspect of life. At all times men have sought to put into words the inspiration life held out to them. It is an art which springs from the soil of the common life, influenced by its vagaries and changefulness. Yet, whatever the mode of living, literature continues to grow and evolve, blossoming again into fresh forms of expression. Changes may appear in outward forms, but the essential character remains.

The quick and undeniable urge of inspiration has handed to the world a precious heritage of written words —something of too great a value to be lost in the passage of time, and we resort to a chronicle of these memorable matters. What should this chronicle be? Not merely a record of the bare facts in the order of their happening, but a record that will display also something of the times and events that assisted in producing memorable literature. The history of literature is in fact a record of the changing conditions which have operated on the growth of literature.

Leaving generalisations aside, the writing of literary

history displays certain definite aspects. It is a record of the art of writing; it is an examination of outside forces (not necessarily artistic at all) and of formative literary influences; it is a corollary of a certain theory of criticism; and finally, the principal support of a federation of the art of letters. Although these many conditions are imposed on the literary historian, his *first* object is a record of literary events. From this arises the question as to what may be termed literature for the purposes of history. A definition of literature (in its strict sense) has already been given, but the historian is not confined to the literature of imagination. Writings, which are produced in the pursuit of knowledge, are equally a part of his field, either as a contribution of value to a subject, or from the excellence of literary style. The editors of the "Cambridge History of English Literature" defined their field as "[also] the literature of science and philosophy, and that of politics and economics, parliamentary eloquence, scholarship, the pamphlet literature of religious and political controversy, the newspaper and magazine, the labours of the press, homely books dealing with precept and manners, domestic letters and street songs, accounts of travel and records of sport." (Preface.) This material may not be literature in the critical sense of the word, although some of it is, but it is part of the concern of the historian of letters. Also it may give to the historian evidence concerning the social life.

This important factor of social and economic forces operating on the growth of literature must not be confused with a certain modern use of these terms. The vagaries of custom and social usage, the change of the mode and the manner of everyday life have their echo in writing. Events happening in the larger sphere of national history

also form, indirectly, part of the mainsprings of imaginative inspiration. These considerations are the groundwork of literary history. In the purely literary field, traditional literature and the literature of personal inspiration are studied side by side with the influence of foreign literature and the common debt to Greece and Rome.

Between history and criticism there is a very close relationship: namely, that the historian of literature is both historian and critic, and that the function of the historian has some special significance for criticism itself.

History and Criticism

From Aristotle and Longinus to the present day, various theories of criticism have been propounded into which it is not the present purpose to inquire. But the writing of literary history introduced an altogether new factor in criticism.

English literary history (excluding Warton) did not exist previous to Hallam's work of 1837. In this matter England was far behind the rest of Europe. Carlyle refers to "The almost frightful labouriousness of Bouterwek or Eichorn," who founded German literary history in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Since 1733 (with intervals) the French Benedictines of St Maur had been writing the "Histoire Litteraire de la France," now continued under the direction of the Institut Français. After Mazzuchelli's unfinished biographical history of Italian literature, Tiraboschi, during 1772-83, placed the literary history of his country on a firm footing. These were all literary historians in the proper sense of the word, and their work gave a fairly ample equipment to the foreign student, of which there was no equivalent in England. It

stands to reason, therefore, that this absence of history leaves English criticism as far as Lamb and Coleridge without any sign of historical considerations. Critical theories had been laid down, largely on Aristotelian lines, but critical method was largely unformulated. During the first two centuries of English criticism, some great literature was written—books that will always be read. Yet the instability of critical thought gave power to contemporary prejudice; always a dangerous matter to the critic. Johnson may be cited as an example of a critic who rises to greatness when the poetry under his judgment conforms to a certain contemporary definition of verse. Outside that range of poetry Johnson was a very poor critic indeed.

Of course the growth of theories and formulation of method does not mean that the same danger cannot arise again. Schlegel, a century after Johnson, put forward a theory of artistic criticism, built on certain theories regarding æsthetics. His ideas were largely followed by Pater and Symonds. The basis of their approach to literature was personal sympathy and appreciation, which take no account of the natural reaction felt by every reader to the literature of his own time. With the mind steeped in contemporary notions it is largely impossible and certainly untrustworthy to form judgments on these lines. Aesthetic theories are not in their nature applicable to historical methods. The most significant development in that quarter came from the scientific developments of the last century.

The first practical expression of the scientific theory of criticism and history came from France. Emile Hennequin in his "La Critique Scientifique" (1888) formulated certain principles, terming his method Esthopsycologie. Taine belongs to the same group, but came to it indirectly

from a different source. This question will be dealt with later when considering the methods of literary history. In England Sir Edmund Gosse in his "Modern English Literature" (1897) followed a similar line of thought in advocating the admission of Spenserian principles "into this little world of æsthetics," but not from the same aspect as Emile Hennequin. R. G. Moulton (an American) wrote a popular exposition of this theory in "Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist" (1888), but English literary historians (*or* critics) have added very little to the bulk of work written with this theory in mind.

Leaving altogether this *rapprochement* between science and criticism, there is a method which has been left for fuller discussion on account of its greater importance to literary history. Professor Saintsbury in his "History of English Criticism"[1] wrote, "Without literary history, literary criticism . . . is impossible; that the defects of the latter have, as a rule, been directly connected with ignorance or imperfect knowledge of the former." This connotes a method of criticism which depends in the first place on a complete system of literary history. It means further that any question of *a priori* reasoning is ruled out altogether. That, through the means of literary history the critic is aware of what has been written and can recognise what may be termed the permanent element in literature—that, through certain qualities hardly to be defined, a writer has achieved immortality. Reading renders these qualities familiar to the mind and forms a starting-place for formulating ideas on contemporary writings. To the critic it offers a rational approach to literature by discarding any preconceived notions as to what literature should be. This has been termed the

[1] Page 294.

"Comparative" method, and the part it has played in modern literary criticism will be seen later.

The last of the factors defined as part of the subject is the question of a federation of literature. A vision of western literature seen as one great world of letters, in which each nationality is no more than part of a wonderful and intricate design. To see this the barrier of language must be surmounted, and by knowing and reading literature produced at the same time and under similar historical conditions we may grasp the homogeneity of the art of letters.

Methods and Arrangement of Material

The methods of writing history and the arrangement of material assume great importance for the historian because of the great diversity of elements in the historical field. Further, method has some close alliance with critical theories, particularly in reference to scientific criticism. Distinct methods have been little used in England and little attention has been paid to method (as such) by historians of literature. There have been none of the brilliant, but critically unsound, attempts at writing and defining literary-historical methods that have come from France and Germany, and here we return to the "scientific" principles already mentioned. Writing in 1900, M. Georges Renard says, "Nous savons que toute les causes des phènoménes litteraires se rangent en trois grandes catégories sans plus; milieu pschyo-physiologique (hérédité, race tempérament, etc.); milieu térreste et cosmique (climate, aspect du sol, nature ambiente, etc.); milieu social (conditions économiques, politiques, religeuses, etc.)" (Le méthode scientifique de l'histoire littéraire).

This is an interpretation of literature through a certain *milieu* on more or less scientific principles. Taine's famous "History of English Literature" is an example of a history written on a plan in which literature is viewed through the *milieu* of race and civilisation. Taine, however, got his ideas from a source which was not by any means "scientific." Contemporary with Sainte Beuve, he absorbed and crystallised Sainte Beuve's critical method. This consisted, broadly, of approaching literature through the medium of the writer. With the aid of letters, diaries, and any of the material of biography Sainte Beuve sought to reveal the state of the writer's mind, and thus approach the fruits of his thought. This (to borrow M. Renard's term) might be termed the psycho-physiological approach to literature through the author himself. Taine did not realise that such a method could not be broadened and applied to history. Consequently he made the *man* more important than the *book*. Literature, he considered, "is but a mound, like a fossil-shell. . . . Under the shell there was an animal and behind the document there was a man." (Introduction. Van Laun's translation). Sainte Beuve himself, in a "Causerie" devoted to Taine, condemned such an extreme application of the method. He summed up the whole question by saying that the author would have reduced the number of his contradictors had he called the work by its true title of "Histoire de la race et de la civilisation Anglaises par la littérature."

Despite their general soundness scientific methods had considerable influence on literary historians in Europe. George Brandes' "Main Currents in nineteenth-century Literature," Ten Brink's "Geschichte der Englishchen Litteratur," and Scherer's "Geschichte der Deutschen

Litteratur," were all written under Taine's influence. Modern German scholarship, however, is surrendering its allegiance to scientific methods, as may be seen in Wilhelm Creizenach's "Geschichte des Nueren Dramas." In England, W. J. Courthope's "History of English Poetry" was, indeed, written on an inductive method, but this had no relation to "Esthopsycologie." Courthope was not concerned with the scientific ideas at all, a matter which will be referred to in examining his "English Poetry."

There is a practical difficulty for the historian, for the limitations of history are in the main concerned with the scope and size of his work. A complete consideration of all the factors which make up the sum total of a nation's progress in literature would entirely swamp the primary object for which the historian works. As a general rule the general conclusions drawn from these considerations must suffice, and in them to a large extent the value of the history will lie.

Arrangement of Material

Few arts have had so humble a beginning as the subject of this thesis. The antiquarian in his search for "remains" happened to come upon books and manuscripts in monastic and ecclesiastical libraries. Regarding these merely in the same light as coins and medals, he made records of their existence. To this alone we owe the first bare records of literary documents, with nothing more than an alphabetical sequence of names and *praenomina* at that. Methods of arrangement developed as attention came to be paid to early literature. The first serious consideration of the subject came from Pope in his plan for a history of English poetry. This was printed by Owen Ruffhead in

his biography of the poet, and has since been reprinted in the introduction to Courthope. The governing idea was a classification of English poetry under "schools" of literary inspiration. With this idea in mind he divided English poetry into six schools—Provence, Chaucer, Petrarch, Dante, Spencer, Donne. Pope never advanced beyond this plan, which passed into the hands of Gray. He, with the collaboration of Mason, intended putting it to practical use, adding a further "school" for contemporaries, which he termed the "French school." The "Pope plan," however, was condemned to remain unused, for Gray heard that Thomas Warton was already engaged in the task, and without reluctance Gray abandoned the idea. Two very well-known letters passed between the poet and the professor, in which Warton gives his reasons for discarding the Pope-Gray plan.

Pope's arrangement of English poetry was not by any means ideal. It certainly broke the ground, but these "schools" were an analogy borrowed from painting and did not convey any real meaning in literary history. Arrangement of material does not end with the mere question of providing chapter headings. It should give some very good indication of the changes that occur in literary taste. Here Warton also failed, for he adopted a hard and fast chronological method which did little more than place the documents of poetry in the order of their appearance. Joseph Warton, brother of the historian, outlined a plan for a history of English poetry in his "Essay on Pope." He wrote, "Our English poets may, I think, be dispersed into four different classes; in the first class I would place our only three sublime and pathetic poets, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton." The plan continued to enumerate poets into four classes of gradually

decreasing excellence, until we come to the " Mere versifiers, Pitt, Sandys. . . . " This idea has the doubtful distinction of being the worst plan of its kind ever devised. A recent book (" English Literature," by Geraldine Hodgson) has revived a method of arrangement that was once used a good deal. The writer arranged her material under the headings of the different forms of literature, as the drama, poetry, etc. Unless the purpose in view is to write a history of the development of these forms (as Miss Hodgson has) the plan is not a good one. What matters in literary history is the general view of a writer's work, in relation to the times which surrounded him, and separate considerations of a writer spread over a variety of sections cannot give any comprehensive view.

Considering methods of arrangement as a whole there have been five methods: alphabetical; by " schools " ; by standards of literary excellence ; by literary forms ; and by chronological arrangement. Of these the only feasible method is the last named, and even this must end in a compromise. For the forms of literature cannot be totally ignored, and there are many different kinds of writing. *Strict* chronological sequence is not possible or even desirable. The historian has first to determine what the natural divisions of the subject are—then to group and arrange his material in order to show the significance of particular developments. It is possible to ignore productions in their strict chronological place, and either anticipate or postpone critical considerations. It is not uncommon to see, for instance, the account of the mediæval drama considered with the rise of Elizabethan drama. The development of the drama is then given in an unbroken sequence. This may show some advantage in studying literary forms as distinct developments. Of

course, division by forms is artificial and a purely arbitrary (but unavoidable) arrangement. If it is used in the order of time, and due regard is paid to special developments, the whole design can be given unity and significance. Dealing with the literary history of a continent, a fresh element is introduced with the question of dividing the nationalities and languages. It complicates the design immensely, and in this matter lies one of the greater faults of Hallam's "Introduction." These considerations are postponed until we reach Hallam in his proper place.

The writing of histories of national literature does not complete the field of work in the subject. In an age of specialisation, special studies of particular periods and developments are not surprising. This work is mainly of value and falls roughly into three classes :—

1. Dealing fully with one special period.
2. Dealing with one literary form, as a whole. The drama, etc.
3. The history of a particular form within a certain period.

What has been said of the general aspect of literary history also applies to this kind of work, except that in covering a smaller field many difficulties are lessened.

The most recent development in specialised literary history is the German study of *Quellenforschung*, the study of comparative literature. This interest, by pursuing only the derivative side of literature, seeks to link up the relationship between the literature of one nation to that of another, as well as the universal influence of the Greek and Latin classics. Although comparative literature appears as a modern development, signs of the study are as old as literary history itself. Warton, in his "History

of English Poetry" when dealing with the "Induction" to the "Mirrour for Magistrates," singled out the description of hell for a complete comparison with Homer, Virgil, and Dante. Earlier still, in 1687, Langbaine's "Monus Triumphans" dealt with what we now call "Source Books," but what *he* called "Plagiaries," thereby forecasting a modern departure which has assumed very large proportions and is now a special and distinct branch of literary studies.

This department is augmented from the source of the literary monograph, mainly in the form of University degree theses, and of special series of literary studies. The bulk of this type of work is American, where the publishing of degree theses is a corollary of success. A good deal of "original research" has been produced by these means, and it may be said to form a body of (mainly) fresh literary evidence. Not all of these books are readable, neither does the obscure part of the subject always justify the portentous volume. There remains, however, their value to students of literature. The "Studies in English" of Yale and Harvard Universities and the Columbia University "Studies in English and Comparative Literature" are well known among series of books of this kind. Highly specialised in their subject, they fall mainly into fairly definite lines of research :—

1. The tracing of the growth of a story or type of story, as M. P. Conant's "Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century."
2. The study of "source books" as S. L. Woolf's "Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction."
3. The literary influence of an author, of a group of authors, or of a national literature, as D. H.

Miles' "The Influence of Molière on Restoration Comedy."

4. The history of a certain species of literature or of a literary form, as C. Morgan's "The Novel of Manners."
5. The study of an obscure or doubtful fact of literary history, as J. L. Hotson's "The Death of Marlowe."

Comparative literature has gained most from these specialised studies. They are not (strictly speaking) literary history, and no attempt will be made to consider them in this thesis. I propose to write of those historians of literature whose work fulfils the definition laid down at the beginning of this Introduction. This is further limited to English historians of the national literature, dealing with the subject as a whole or a particular literary form in its entire development. An attempt is made to see in literary history a more or less modern development of a type of writing that has existed from the foundation of English criticism. The early attempts to preserve the literary history of this country were inspired by the same idea that inspires the modern historian, defects were with methods and the general attitude of learning towards letters. The gradual development of English literary history is traced from the first antiquarian cataloguers, through the literary biographers that succeeded Phillips and Langbaine, to the final development of the art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

With these historical considerations I have tried to show the *relative* importance of literary history to literature as a whole and the *particular* importance it bears towards criticism—that it is not merely a valley of dry bones, but a healthy pleasant place, where the critic may find constant inspiration and a fund of robust ideas concerning letters.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS.

THE CATALOGUERS AND ANTIQUARIANS

The beginnings of the English literary history are found in a few documents that are little more than curiosities, writings that are no more than museum pieces stored away on a very high shelf. Yet, after careful dusting, they are revealed as perfectly genuine articles of their kind. In the introduction certain arguments were based on Warton's parenthood of the English literary historians. Such is the case, and before him the record of literature was a tradition embalmed in some Latin catalogues and a few collections of biographies. In the middle of the fifteenth century two monks attempted to record the contents of the monastic libraries of England, and in the following century a great antiquarian found further evidence of an earlier age in ancient manuscripts and printed books. The thread is picked up later by purely "literary" compilers, and the catalogue entries were annotated with biographical information. Later, the catalogue was dropped altogether, and the biographies swelled to a very large size, but this takes us a very long way from our monastic bibliophiles.

John Boston and Alanus de Linna were both born about 1420. (Nicholson, "Historical Libraries.") They are very legendary characters, for the work of Alanus disappeared centuries ago, and only a very small portion of John Boston's manuscript now remains. Leland speaks

of both, and Boston's catalogue was certainly known to him under the title of "Catalogus scriptorum ecclesiae." We next hear of it three centuries later in Berkenhout's preface to his "Biographia." He states that he saw a copy of Fuller's "Worthies" annotated by Oldys the antiquarian to the effect that a copy of the manuscript was once owned by Archbishop Ussher, and that Doctor Gale intended publishing it. Oldys further says that it was announced as in the course of publication in the latter part of the reign of King William IV. Unfortunately this copy of Fuller is not in the British Museum Library. The only existing portion of Boston's catalogue is found in Tanner's "Bibliotecha," where Doctor Williams printed the English section in the preface. Bishop Bale constantly refers to it in his note-book ("Index Scriptores Britanniae," Oxford, 1902) as "Bostoni Buriensis Catalogus," but beyond these references and the small printed portion, nothing remains.

Alanus is supposed to have been the Prior of the Carmelite Priory at Lynn, and Bale's reference to Boston is understood if it is realised that his monastery was at Bury St Edmunds. With the loss of their catalogues there disappeared also the only record of the contents of the libraries of England before the Reformation. What was lost during the time of the destruction of the monasteries is not entirely known, but a defender of the libraries came forward in the person of John Leland, and here we are on firmer ground.

The sixteenth century saw the great rebirth of the art of letters in England, and criticism grew side by side with a great activity in other forms of literature. It was an age of such great fecundity that the present occupied the complete attention of critical thought, and early English literature was little heeded. Indeed, contemporary his-

torical writing itself was mainly on the theme of "Our own Time," and for a very long period we have no records of literature from a direct source. The times, however, gave birth to a great antiquarian, and he was that John Leland already mentioned.

John Leland (or Leyland) was born in 1506. Having studied at Cambridge and in Paris (under Francis Sylvius) he returned to England for ordination, receiving afterwards the appointment of private chaplain to Henry VIII. Later the King appointed him "Library Keeper," and in 1533, under broad seal, "King's Antiquary," destined to be the first and the last. In the twenty-eighth year of Henry's reign, Leland set out to survey the antiquities of England and Wales, in which survey the contents of the important libraries were to form a part. For six years Leland pursued his studies, and returning to Court he received the reward of ecclesiastical preferment, a living at Haseley, and later the Prebends of Christchurch (then King's College), and East and West Knowll. He then compiled his notes into four (manuscript) volumes, and presented them to the King, under the title of "A New Year's Gift." Leland now retired to arrange his collections (presumably for publication), but died before this was completed in 1552 (D.N.B., etc.). His work remained in manuscript until Bishop Bale edited it in 1549, under the title of "The Labouryouse Journey and serche of Johan Leylande for Englandes Antiquities." This did not include the commentary on the English writers (although Bale included a register of English authors compiled by himself), which was not printed until Anthony Hall published it in 1709, under the title, "Commentarii de Scriptoribus Britannicis, ex autographo Lelandino," etc. Bishop Tanner collected notes for a further edition, which

finally evolved into the " Bibliotheca Britannica Hibernia " (to be referred to later).

This eighteenth-century enthusiasm for Leland was inspired by Thomas Hearne, of whom Pope says—

> " On parchment scraps y-fed, and Wormius hight.
> To future ages may thy dulness last,
> As thou preserv'st the dulness of the past."—
> —*Dunciad*, iii. 188.

who was extremely wroth at being forestalled by Hall.

Leland's commentary is no more than a Latin catalogue of writers to which descriptive and biographical notes were added. They are very vague and of little use, but Leland's work is important for two reasons. First, it was the first record (at all complete) of English Literature. Secondly, he realised that chronological arrangement was the only logical plan for a record of writing. He was a great antiquarian, to whom later such men as Stow, Dugdale, and Holinshed owed many things. In the same way the literary compilers borrowed freely from his manuscripts, and in all of their works the likeness of Leland, their common parent, may be seen.

In 1548 appeared the " Illustrium Majoris Britanniae Scriptorum, hoc est Angliae, Cambriae, ac Scotiae, Summarium," by John Bale. The author was a churchman who practised his work in troubled times. Born in the year 1495, he went first to the Carmelite friars at Norwich, and then to Jesus College, Cambridge. At that time a Catholic, he renounced his faith and religious vows and claimed protection from Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex. Bale had a very biting tongue and he made many enemies on Cromwell's behalf. Consequently when the latter fell from power in 1540, Bale was obliged to fly from their vengeance. Germany gave him a refuge, and there he found

leisure to compile this work. The accession of Edward VI in 1547, brought Bale back to England, and he published the "Britanniae Scriptorum" in the following year. Ecclesiastical preferment followed, and finally, in 1552, he was made Bishop of the Irish see of Ossory. On the death of Edward VI, Bale was once more an involuntary exile, Basle becoming his refuge on this occasion. Again he used his enforced leisure to publish an enlarged edition of the catalogue. Elizabeth's accession brought him back once more to England. Too old and worn to resume his see, he went to Canterbury as a prebendary of the Cathedral, dying there in 1563 (D.N.B., etc.).

Bishop Bale was a writer of many parts, his activities stretching from religious controversy to the stage. A discussion of his work is out of place here, except for the "Britanniae Scriptorum." Written in Latin, it is a catalogue of British (excluding Irish) authors, arranged, after Leland, in chronological order. Bale's definition of "British" was very elastic, and included churchmen executing their office in England for a limited period. For some obscure reason the authors are further grouped into hundreds, each author receiving his chronological order within these centurion groups, the groups themselves being also in the order of time. Each writer is dealt with in a short biographical notice, followed by a list of works. The first edition (1548) was dedicated to Edward VI, and the title-page bears the name of Ipswich as the place of publication, although copies exist with Wesel, 1549, on the title-page. It has been claimed as the first book printed in Ipswich, but the evidence is slight and doubtful. The second enlarged edition (Basle, 1557) was followed two years later by a supplement. To this edition Bale added three hundred further authors with references and

indexes. After Bale's death his manuscript note-books and collections were preserved, and eventually became part of the Selden Library. With that collection they passed into the keeping of the Bodleian Library.

In 1902, the note-books were edited by Richard L. Poole and Mary Bateson, under the title of "Index Britanniae Scriptorum" (Anecdota Oxoniensia, Medieval and Modern Series). The editors in their Preface point out the essential differences between the "Index" and the original work. They are :—

1. It [the Index] is arranged alphabetically, not chronologically.
2. A large majority of the articles are followed by a reference to the authority or source from which they were derived.

Here Bale's work appears without literary embellishment. His bitter criticisms and harsh anti-Catholic feelings find full expression. Fuller called him "Bilous Bale," and he says there is "hardly a Billingsgate phrase in the Latin language which he has not employed." In Bale's work there is a good deal of legendary material, and Fuller, with others, listed some of these "English writers" who never existed outside contemporary imagination. To-day, the catalogue is hardly worth such serious examination. It is no more than a formal record without (owing to Leland) the merit of originality.

The antiquarians continued to busy themselves with literary matters. Bishop Bale's immediate successor was John Pits. Like his predecessor's, his life was spent "beyond the seas for conscience' sake," with this difference —that Pits was a Catholic who suffered from the reaction that brought Bale back to England and reinstatement.

Pits was born in 1560, and after being educated at Oxford, studied for the Catholic priesthood at Rheims and Rome, receiving ordination in 1587. Some years spent in teaching in various parts of Europe ended with his appointment as Chaplain to the Duchess of Cleves. During his service there he compiled a catalogue of English authors, which remained unprinted until 1619, three years after Pits' death (D.N.B.). This work appeared under the title of "Relationum Historicarum de rebus Anglicis," edited by William Bishop, a Doctor of the Sorbonne.

It is better known by its running title, "De Illustribus Angliae Scriptoribus," and is quoted as "Pitseus de Scriptoribus." According to the title-page, this was the first volume, but no further volumes were published. In language and arrangement Pits' work is similar to Leland and Bale, but with one unique feature. Part three of the book is devoted to the works of Catholics writing and publishing books abroad during the period of the Reformation. In this he rendered an original service to literary records. The workmanship of the book as a whole is faulty. Not only does he neglect bibliographical details, but fails to state whether a work was in manuscript or printed form. Pits quotes Leland as his chief authority. Leland's work, however, was still in manuscript, and during that time (as far as I can discover) in the possession of Humphrey Purefoy. Pits was too long in exile for this statement to be feasible, and Bale (whose work was in print) most probably formed his chief source of information. A strong Catholic bias prompted Pits to exclude from his work Wyclif and his followers with other Reformers, and his critical opinions generally have the same unbalanced leanings. Beyond the record of exiled Catholic authors, he added very little fresh material to the existing records.

Up to this time, the compilers had dealt (or claimed to deal with) the literature of both England and Scotland. For some reason Ireland appeared too remote to be included in their work. One Scotsman, however, was so convinced of the superiority of his race that he formed a record of its literary activities to show some definite proof of his argument. Thus there appeared the "Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Scotorum, sive de Scriptoribus Scotis," by Thomas Dempster, published in 1627, and edited for the Bannatyne Club in 1829 by David Irvine. Dempster was born in Scotland in 1579, and after being educated at Aberdeen and Cambridge, taught in the schools at Paris, Pisa, and Bologna. He remained in the last-named place till his death in 1625, where his work was published posthumously. This is a Latin collection of biographies in nineteen books, covering the whole period of Scottish literature, and containing a highly improbable autobiography. Dempster was determined to show the world how much greater the Scotch were in the field of letters than any other nation. He cast his net with a very wide sweep and captured some fish that have a very alien appearance among his Scotian species. For example, Alanus and Boniface were in Scotland at one time in connection with ecclesiastical matters. This is ample ground for Dempster to place them among the glories of Scotland —even Boadicea appears as a Scotswoman. His criticism denotes nothing more than the fundamental idea of Scottish superiority in a superlative measure.

Ireland found a literary champion of considerably greater importance than Dempster. Sir James Ware achieved fame both in politics and in his enthusiasm for Celtic literature and history. Born in 1594, he entered Irish public life at a troubled time under the patronage

of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. In 1639 he published his book, "De Scriptoribus Hiberniae," and dedicated it to his patron. Divided into two parts (both arranged in the order of time), part one contains an account of all the authors born in Ireland from the year 400 to the end of the sixteenth century, part two giving an account of those who had any official connection with Ireland. This work was only a part of the services he rendered to Celtic studies, both in recording Celtic literature and in collecting manuscripts. Working under extreme difficulties in an unsettled country, suffering political imprisonment and exile, he preserved the raw material of historical study, and that at a time when it suffered the chance of being completely lost. After his death in 1666, the Earl of Clarendon purchased Ware's collection, and catalogues were compiled in Dublin and London. His work is perhaps the unique example of the services rendered by an enthusiast to a larger field in which he himself was unable to take a very conspicuous part.

The value of these records to literary history is very slight and no claim is made for their fundamental importance. They are regarded as curious and interesting documents rather than matters of either great historical or literary importance. They contain a certain amount of information (some of which is fabulous) which adds little to the equipment of the modern historian. Criticism, if at any time it appears, is childish or merely rancorous. Despite these drawbacks they are most decidedly the beginnings of an important development in historical writing. Their compilers were men of unbounded enthusiasm for literature, who found their material by most laborious journeyings to libraries in distant parts of England. Without claiming any outstanding importance,

they have a small permanent niche in the scheme of English letters.

The next development displays greater consciousness of effort, and it brings this account forward to the time of the Restoration. Criticism still held aloof from history, and the succeeding Age of Reason had little desire for a record of barbarous literature. The eighteenth century was quite content with a record of its own literary achievements. A favourable turn of the tide came with the revival of romance. The beginnings of this revival are marked by the work of the Warton brothers and the first history of English poetry. Before that event, however, we have in front of us the contributions that the Age of Reason made (in a very indirect way) to the small trickle of literary record.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY LITERARY BIOGRAPHERS AND THE LAST ANTIQUARIAN COMPILERS

The complete success of antiquarian studies with its consequent reaction on the study of literature was assisted by events which have not yet been considered. These were the foundation of antiquarian societies. In 1572, Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, founded the "Assembly of Antiquarians," which received a royal charter in 1589. Parker's society promoted a certain interest in literature. He himself assisted Bale to edit Leland's "Labouryouse Journey," and endeavoured to secure Bale's collections for permanent preservation after his death. ("Correspondence of Matthew Parker," edited by Bruce and Perowne, 1853.) Further, Parker published certain early chronicles: the "Flores Historiarum" (1560-70), Paris' "Chronica Majora" (1571), Asser's "Life of Alfred" (1574), and other manuscripts. His patronage of the scholars of early English, Foxe, Lambarde, and his secretary, Joscelyn, is additional evidence that he had a definite interest in early literary documents. Among the members of the "Assembly of Antiquarians" was John Cotton, the collector; Stow, who loaned Speght certain manuscripts for his edition of Chaucer, and Hickes, author of the "Institutiones Grammaticae Anglo-Saxonicae." Humphrey Wanley contributed to this work a catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, noting for the first time the unique Beowulf manuscript now in the Cottonian collection. The Society had therefore some importance in literary scholarship,

although it was partly attracted to letters as the products of a remote age. This fostering of regard for early literary documents, however, not only provided records of material but probably played some part in preserving the contents of the monastic and ecclesiastical libraries during the Reformation. With the passing of the Elizabethan period, there is a distinct change in the feeling towards early literature. The great literary production of Elizabeth's reign gradually attracted interest away from antiquities. The old " Assembly of Antiquarians " expired from inanition, and an attempt to revive it on an elaborate scale was abortive. The study of literature divorced itself from antiquarianism, and any form of literary record coming later had some genuine interest in letters. This interest was largely directed towards the purely objective facts of biography and literary production. Criticism when it appeared was not all distinguished, but, at least, these writers form a link between Leland and Warton.

The first of the " Baby " historians was Edward Phillips, born in 1630 and died in 1696. To Milton (his uncle) he owed his early education, which was continued at Oxford in 1648 (D.N.B.). After a number of literary adventures he published in 1674 a work entitled " Theatrum Poetarum, or a Complete Collection of the Poets." It is a collection of biographies of Poets, divided into two classes of " ancient " and " modern," followed by a list of poetesses all alphabetically arranged under their *praenomina*. The conditions of obtaining material made the work very slight in value, and bibliographical detail of any kind is rarely given. Phillips aimed at criticism, and although the critical remarks are puerile, the taste displayed was decidedly above that of his time.

His praise of Shakespeare has inclined critics to assume

that Milton himself had a hand in the work. Warton the historian, in his preface to his edition of Milton's "Juvenilia," says, "There is a good reason to suppose that Milton threw many additions and connections into the 'Theatrum Poetarum.' It contains singular criticism for this period among which is his judgment of Shakespeare." Against this may be said that the book is dedicated to two Cavaliers, Thomas Stanley and Sir Edward Sherburne, and it is hardly likely that Milton would have any hand in that. A more likely explanation is that Phillips, constantly hearing Milton's own opinions was impressed by them, and consequently his own views were influenced. Professor Saintsbury has pointed to the best of this work in the discrimination that Phillips showed in praising Wither's "Shepherd's Hunting" (then unpopular with the critics), and further in his treatment of Drummond of Hawthornden, whose works he edited in 1686. The "Theatrum Poetarum" was republished in 1800 by Sir Egerton Brydges, who selected the English lives and rearranged them into chronological order. Phillips was a pioneer and others were quick to follow in his path. His idea of a collection of literary biographies became a fashion which may be said to have lasted to the time of Morley's "English Writers."

Gerard Langbaine was a contemporary of Phillips, being born at Oxford in 1656, and dying there in 1692. Seven years after the "Theatrum Poetarum" appeared, he published "Momus Triumphans; or, The Plagiaries of the English Stage exposed, in a catalogue of comedies, tragedies," etc. (1687). The author says, further, that it is "An account of the various originals, as well as English, French and Italian, as Greek and Latin, from whence most of them have stolen their plots." His purpose was to

expose, and as Disraeli the elder says: "He read poetry only to detect plagiarisms." There is very little to be said for Langbaine in this light. Yet, he served one purpose in drawing attention to the sources of dramatic plots, a study which has attracted considerable attention in recent years. Compared with modern conclusions the Shakespeare sources are incomplete. Neither does he refer to Elizabethan translations, such as Painter's "Palace of Pleasure" and North's "Plutarch," etc., but in every case refers directly to Bandello, Cynthio, and Boccaccio, etc. Langbaine himself admits many of the plagiaries to have been innocent, and beyond pointing out a profitable line of study, his work did not serve any useful purpose.

"An Account of the English Dramatic Poets," dedicated to James, Earl of Abingdon, was published by the same writer at Oxford in 1691 (revised by Gildon in 1699). Phillips' arrangement was adopted with the difference of arranging under surnames instead of pre-names. The opening passage reads: "Our alphabet begins with this worthy nobleman [William Alexander] who was a Scot by birth," etc. Not a promising beginning and fairly indicative of the general style of the work. It owes a good deal to Phillips, but there is considerable improvement in the frequency of dates and bibliographical data. Critical value it has none.

There are two most interesting copies which I have seen in the British Museum, which are noteworthy as being, for practical purposes, new editions. William Oldys, the antiquarian, embellished a copy with marginal notes. Bishop Percy (of the "Reliques") transcribed Oldys' notes into an interleaved copy. The Bishop's volumes passed into the hands of Monck Mason and Halliwell-Phillips, gathering fresh material on their way. Oldys'

own copy passed through the hands of Coxeter and Theophilus Cibber, also receiving fresh marginalia. The book was apparently held in some esteem, perhaps for the simple reason that there was nothing better.

William Winstanley's "Lives of the most Famous English Poets" appeared in 1687, five years before Langbaine's "Lives." Winstanley's biography is very vague and, according to Wood's "Athenae Oxonienses," he lived from 1628 to 1698. The same authority states him to have been a London barber. "He resigned the razor," wrote Wood. "The scissors however he retained, for he borrowed without stint and with acknowledgment from his predecessors." A comparison with Phillips shows him to have taken accounts of authors, word by word, without alterations. Some of the more famous poets had additional matter inserted, but with the exception of the chronological arrangement, very little of Winstanley can be said to be original. His greatest heights are reached when abusing political opponents; of Milton he says, "His fame has gone out like a candle in a snuff and his memory will always stink" (p. 195). His political bias even persuaded him to depart from Phillips and refrain from praising Wither.

Some mention must be made of the biographer, Anthony Wood (1632–1695), self-styled Á Wood, author of the "Athenae Oxonienses; or, An exact history of all the writers and bishops who have had their education at Oxford" (1691), to which he added the annals of the University. Two volumes were published and a third left in the manuscript passed from Dr Tanner to Tonson, the publisher, who used it for the edition of 1721. This third volume contained lives missed in the main work which Philip Bliss edited as a whole in four volumes,

1813–1817. The original idea came from Dr Fell, Dean of Christchurch, and as a work of reference it has proved extremely valuable. The order of time is followed more or less and lists of books are added to the accounts of authors. The interest is antiquarian and not critical, just aiming at a collection of lives and nothing more.

Sir Thomas Pope Blount (1649–1697) introduced an original idea in his "Censura Celebriorum Authorum," published at London in 1690, republished at Geneva in 1694 and 1710. It is a collection of criticisms made upon the principal English authors. The work is more or less polyglot as the critical excerpts are in their original language, except in the Geneva edition where they were anonymously translated into Latin. Blount's original share in the compilation consisted in the selection of authors. Here his critical talent is not conspicuous. For example, Shakespeare and Milton are ignored and their forgotten contemporaries included.

Leland and Bale had one last successor in Thomas Tanner, Bishop of St Asaph. Born in 1674, he entered Queen's College, Oxford, in 1689, was ordained, and after various ecclesiastical preferments was consecrated at Lambeth in 1732, dying three years later (Hardy "Catalogue"). In 1748 his work, entitled "Bibliotheca Britannico Hibernica sive de Scriptoribus qui in Anglia, Scotia, et Hibernia," etc., appeared under the editorship of Dr Wilkins and at the expense of the "Society for Encouraging Learning." It was the result of a life spent in collecting material, and incorporates the whole of Leland and Bale with the inclusion of fresh material. His aim was to give a complete account of all English authors, from the beginning to the seventeenth century, and if the work does not quite fulfil this it is a consider-

able advance on previous attempts. The arrangement is alphabetical under authors' surnames, and is written in Latin. Concerning Tanner little can be added to what has been said of Bale and Leland. Tanner's work stands alongside theirs as a complement, extended and amplified. It was in the introduction to Tanner's work that Dr Wilkins printed the English section of John Boston's lost catalogue, to which reference has been made.

An interesting index of literary taste in the late seventeenth century is Joseph Addison's "An Account of the Greatest English Poets," published in Dryden's "Annual Miscellany" for 1694 (Fourth Part). It is a rhymed account of the English poets and dedicated to "H. S." (Harry Sacheverell), having been written at "dearest Harry's request." It is quite valueless and Addison finds only two pre-Shakespeareans worth mentioning, Chaucer and Spenser, who "In Antick Tales amused a Barbarous Age," but "Can charm our understanding age no more." The age was *so very* understanding that Cowley appears with one fault—"Wit in its excess." It is valueless from any point of view except to show the complete contemporary ignorance of early literary history.

CHAPTER III

LATER LITERARY BIOGRAPHERS

The work which has been so far considered is distinguished by having the common aim of forming some sort of literary record. It has two distinct phases:

1. The antiquarian influence of Leland and Bale.
2. The biographical influence of Phillips and Langbaine.

Thomas Heywood, it is worth noting, is reputed to have written the lives of the English poets, but if he did, the work has so far never been discovered. This interest in collective literary biography greatly increased in the following century, and continued to form an attraction to writers until the latter part of the Victorian era.

English criticism during the seventeenth century had enunciated its general laws and principles. Dryden had written his "Essay on Dramatic Poetry," and Rymer "The Tragedies of the Last Age Considered." The "Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage" had urged Collier to write his famous book. Yet none of this work inspired any writer to apply criticism to the history of literature. Literary antiquarianism was finished, and in its place are the biographers, faintly critical, but nothing else.

Giles Jacobs owns a greater title to fame from Pope's attack in the "Dunciad" than from his work, "The Poetical Register; or, The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets, with an Account of their Writings," published in 1720. In two volumes, the first is

devoted to dramatic poets, and the second to poets who did not confine their art to the theatre. The arrangement is author-alphabetical, and for that reason had not even the slightest pretentions to history. Jacobs in his preface confesses that Langbaine forms the foundation of the work, he himself adding his own contemporaries. Of critical value it has none, except for the eulogic type as when speaking of Addison, he says, "There appears an uncommon beauty, an elegance of style, an improvement of diction, a strength, nobleness and sublimity of thought equalled by few, if any, of our modern poets." Which is saying nothing in a good many words. What after all *is* this "elegant" style? It sounds like a description of the typographical arrangement of the page. Chaucer appears as a paragon of wit and learning, "a great philosopher, a good divine, a skilful mathematician, and an excellent poet." The dates given for plays are the acting dates, and not the year of the first edition. No advance is shown in the writing of the biographies, but this may be excused by the lack of research material.

An eighteenth-century wrangle over an almost worthless book has resounded to this day in Boswell's "Johnson." In 1753 appeared "The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the death of Dean Swift . . . from the MS. Notes of the inglorious Mr Coxeter and Others," by Mr Cibber. Theophilus Cibber (1703–1758) was the son of Colley Cibber, the Poet Laureate. Doubt was thrown on Cibber's authorship by Samuel Johnson, who (according to Boswell) claimed the authorship for his amanuensis, Robert Shiels. Cibber was supposed to have received a gratuity from the publishers for allowing his name to appear on the title-page. This statement was challenged in the *Monthly Review* for May 1792, where it

is stated that Cibber was engaged to correct the final draft. Boswell, in the second edition of "Johnson," criticised this further statement, but the real author is generally believed to be Coxeter. The "Lives" commence with Chaucer and end at Cibber's own contemporaries, Charles Johnson and Mr Chandler, and they are arranged in the order of time. They read like a collection of anecdotes and are full of specious facts without references. No attempt is made at criticism and the bibliographical data are bad. Marlowe's "Faustus" is dated as 1661 (1604) and "Tamberlaine" 1593 (1590). The question of the authorship was hardly worth discussing.

William Chetwood (? *d.* 1766), in the same way as Jacobs, achieved permanent remembrance by being named in Fielding's "Eurydice." A bookseller and minor dramatist, he published in 1750 "The British Theatre, containing the Lives of the English Dramatic Poets." It is similar in arrangement to its predecessors and contains history equally fabulous. Queen Elizabeth appears as a paragon of learning, having known five languages and translated Euripides, "for her own amusement." The early dramatists are treated very scantily, whilst Chetwood's own contemporaries are dealt with in the most ample manner. As he appears to have spent considerable time in debtors' prisons, ulterior motives may have accounted for this.

An anonymous work appeared in 1762, entitled "An Historical and Critical Account of the Lives and Writings of the Living Authors of Great Britain." It was signed with the initial "W.R.," and is attributed to a certain William Rider. Little more than a pamphlet, its sole claim to (a very doubtful) distinction is that the authors are placed in an order of literary merit. It may have inspired

the similarly fantastic scheme of Joseph Warton referred to in the introduction.

Horace Walpole's "Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England" (1758) has a certain value as record. The narrow character of the work renders it merely dilettante. It is not reliable for bibliographical detail, although Thomas Park thought it worth while to edit the "Catalogue" in 1806, bringing the work down to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

John Brown (1715–1766), called "Estimate" Brown (for his "Estimate of Manners"), published in 1763 "A dissertation on the Rise, Union and Power, separations and corruptions of Poetry and Music." The following year it was reprinted, with that part dealing with music omitted "for the sake of such classical readers as are not particularly conversant with music." Although Brown is dealt with here among the biographers, his work is actually a serious attempt at literary history, yet Brown's seriousness is a terrible example of how literary history should *not* be written. It contains, with other fabulous matters, a dissertation on the state of poetry in China and Judea. Certainly somebody took this seriously, for it became for a while a regular feature of attempted histories of literature. Brown's work is too valueless to be considered the first history of English literature.

Very few of these biographical works would repay any attention now. They have a flat dry flavour, and their authors made little attempt to discover anything concerning early writers, whilst they treated the fashionable poets of the day with sedulous compliment. They were none of them serious men-of-letters, but journeymen writers producing books to the order of the bookseller. John Berkenhout's (1703?–1791) "Biographia Literaria;

or, A Biographical History of Literature . . . from the dawn of letters in these Kingdoms to the Present Time" (1777) is a rather different matter. In the first place, some of Berkenhout's information came from George Stevens, a fairly reliable source. Further, his arrangement shows a much wider and more intelligent view of the subject than that of his predecessors. The style is lively, with criticism that is always pointed, even if it is not on a very high plane of literary reasoning. Unfortunately Berkenhout never completed it beyond the first volume which brings the work down to the sixteenth century. Completed, it would have overshadowed entirely the other collections of lives that have been dealt with so far.

We come now to the only work of this kind that has importance in English literature, Johnson's "Lives of the Poets." It must be understood that Johnson is mentioned here, only because his work on the English poets is actually part of the group of biographical writings. The history of the "Lives" has been written many times, but the facts may be repeated here. In 1777 the Edinburgh printer, Martin, published an edition of English poets from Chaucer to Churchill, to be sold by the publisher, Bell. The London publishers fearing an invasion of their literary territory decided to issue a rival collection, more reliable in text and further enhanced by the addition of a short biography to each poet's work. Johnson was commissioned to execute these biographies, and the "Lives of the most Eminent English Poets with Critical Observations on their Work" came to be written. They appeared in two parts in 1779 and 1781, and were published both in book form and as prefaces to the work of the individual poets. In gathering material for the "Lives," Johnson had the assistance of Malone, Reed, Stevens, Warton, and

Mrs Boscawen, all important contemporary scholars. Of the two rival collections of poets the Edinburgh collection is by far the better, its range covering the whole of English poetry from Chaucer. Johnson's collection began with Cowley and ended with his own contemporaries. In this arbitrary division the publishers were guided by the contemporary fashion in literary taste. Johnson was not responsible in the slightest way, except for the inclusion of Blackmore, Pomfret, Yalden, and Watts. What Johnson's personal choice would have been makes interesting speculation, and the fact that these poets were not chosen by Johnson robs the collection of its individuality. Johnson himself was not very enthusiastic about the work and says in Boswell, " I finished the ' Lives of the Poets,' which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste " (" Prayers and Meditations," p. 190). As literary history the " Lives " have little value. They are biographies of an arbitrary group of poets, considered individually without any connecting thread between them beyond their being placed in the order of time. Their criticism is limited by the particularly narrow literary belief of the time and Johnson's own powerful but perverse personality. The real value of Johnson's criticism as such is not within the scope of this thesis. In recent years the " Lives " have come to be recognised as a great piece of criticism with certain limitations. These were the limitations of the Augustan age itself which must be accepted when viewing Johnson's work. When he writes of poetry that he recognises as such (as in the " Cowley " life), Johnson is among the best of English critics ; a place he does not fill among historians of literature. Apart from these considerations these two rival collections of poetry

are important in literary scholarship in being the first collection made of English poets. This ends a particular phase in the development of our subject, a fashion for biography which reached its climax in Granger's biographical history of England and then lost its great popularity. It will be seen that during the ten years (1770–1780) there was great activity in literary scholarship. Berkenhout is quickly followed by Johnson and the first history of English poetry. For many years this had been a conscious want, and more than one famous poet had contemplated the task. Eventually it was executed by a poet better known to-day for his services to literature than for his poetry.

CHAPTER IV

WARTON

To continue the thread of the last chapter, besides this activity in matters of literary history, the latter part of the eighteenth century also saw remarkable developments in English historiography. Lord Bolingbroke's "Letters on the Study and Use of History" in 1735 marked a definite stage in historical writing. They formed a certain definition of historiography, and during the last fifty years of the century Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon transformed historical methods. It was a sudden change from the chronicle type of history to a genuine narrative form, and the same thing happened in literary history with Warton's "History of English Poetry." I think that there is some connection here between the two branches of history. Hume's and Robertson's and also part of Gibbon's work appeared before the "History of English Poetry," and Warton's method was certainly formed on the same plan as a national history. This is in relation to historiography only and the method used by Warton will be referred to again.

It is interesting to compare the literary outlook of Johnson's "Lives" with the "History of English Poetry." They were written within a year or two of each other, yet they represent two totally opposed schools of literary thought. In Warton we see everything that the "Lives" were not. He attempted to see, as a whole, the body of English poetry. With this book and the earlier "Observations on Spenser's 'Faerie Queen'" (1754) he

attempted to explore the neglected avenues of early English poetry, which were later to bear fruit with the romantic revival. Where Warton stood for a liberal outlook on letters, Johnson was the arch-conservative, recognising literature only when it conformed to certain standards of literary form. Yet so strong was Johnson's influence on contemporary thought, that the work of Warton and Percy in reviving interest in early literature remained practically sterile until after Johnson's death.

Thomas Warton was born in 1728. At the age of sixteen he entered Trinity College, Oxford, and graduated B.A. in 1747. Three years later he obtained the degree of M.A., and the following year was elected to a fellowship, remaining connected with the University for the rest of his life. He was elected to the Chair of Poetry at Oxford in 1757, held by him for the next ten years. In 1774 appeared the first volume of the "History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century," to which are prefixed two dissertations :—

1. On the origin of romantic fiction in Europe.
2. On the introduction of learning into England. The second volume was published in 1778 and three years later the last volume. A fourth volume was promised but not published.

The year 1785 saw Warton elected to the Camden Chair of History at Oxford and made Poet Laureate in place of William Whitehead, and he died at Oxford five years later (D.N.B., etc.).

In writing the "History of English Poetry" Warton was faced with those difficulties which are part of any

pioneer work. No previous history existed, and it was left to Warton to devise a plan by which English poetry could be logically divided for the purpose of writing a history. There already existed Pope's plan (discussed in the introduction) which had passed into the hands of Thomas Gray, who intended writing a history on the same lines. Warton at that time had already commenced writing his work and Gray hearing of this gave up the project. Most disinterestedly he sent Pope's plan, with his own additions, to Warton. Warton rejected it, and in writing to Gray said, "I begin with such an introduction or general dissertation as you had intended, viz., on the Northern poetry, with its introduction into England by the Danes and Saxons and its duration. I then begin my history at the Conquest, which I write chronologically in sections, and continue as matter successfully offers itself, in regular annals, down to and beyond the Restoration. I think with you that dramatic poetry is detached from the idea of my work." (Letter, 20th April 1770.) This letter outlines Warton's method and the scope of his history, and incidentally displays its weakness. Pope was not quite sound with his divisions—the "School of Provence" and the "School of Chaucer," etc., an analogy borrowed from painting, but at least this was a step in the right direction. Warton, however, approached the task with different conceptions, and, gathering up his material as he went along, did not attempt any logical scheme of classification.

The plan of the completed work was unreasonable in its divisions and was most likely inspired by the work of the new historians, to which previous reference has been made. The poets are grouped in a strict chronological order divided by the accessions and death of the reigning kings.

This resulted in an artificial classification that ignored the natural groups caused by tendencies of literary thought and influence. The treatment of authors is disproportionate, and the book contains the erudite irrelevancies typical of contemporary scholarship. It is interrupted constantly by long questions, as when Warton is dealing with Chaucer, he gives a long digression on the probable origin of the "Knightes Tale," generously interlarded with the history of Boccaccio and Petrarch. Long quotations are made from the Latin and Greek, particularly in reference to Sackville's Induction to the "Mirrour for Magistrates." These quotations are unnecessarily long and impede the progress of the history. They are relevant in so far as they examine contemporary foreign influences, and for this Warton may be said to have commenced the study of comparative literature but with a too cumbersome method. The history does not deal with Anglo-Saxon literature, and although Warton does not say so he may have arrived at the same conclusion as Courthope—that English poetry came of a partial Latin descent and owed little or nothing to Anglo-Saxon influences. According to Warton's own statement, he begins at the eleventh century. Actually, for historical purposes, he began two centuries later. The eleventh and twelfth centuries are dealt with in such an irrelevant manner that they are of little use. Each document is discussed as it came to Warton's notice, and judged by itself without relation to the subject as a whole and without attempting to place it in any particular order. From the thirteenth century onwards the history goes smoothly enough, with the general defects that have been noted. As a contribution to criticism the history does not take a very high place. Warton was too much of the purely learned scholar to give life to the critical

thoughts he attempted to express. He often compared authors, but more for the sake of tracing the source of their inspiration than for the purpose of criticism. The importance of the "History of English Poetry" lies in another direction altogether. Before Warton commenced to write, the record of English poetry was like a great house long neglected. Certain rooms were in common use, yet many were dark and shuttered, the staircases and corridors unlit. Warton opened this much neglected house. Forgotten ornaments were brought again to the light, some indeed too prominently. For the first time the classical and romantic spirit was analysed and its various influences traced and linked up. Part of the early national poetry was explored and attention drawn to its value and beauty. The romantic spirit was fostered and the return to a simpler and more genuine form of literary expression was made possible. On these larger issues Warton's reputation remains secure. For over a century the "History" remained the only book of its kind. It was edited by Richard Price (1790–1833) in 1824, with notes from Ritson (Warton's severest critic), Douce, Ashby, Park and others. W. C. Hazlitt re-edited the work in 1874, receiving the assistance of Furnivall, Morris, Skeat and others. In order to bring the history up to date, however, the text was entirely altered, with the result that Warton is almost entirely lost sight of. The "History of English Poetry" was our first history of literature, in the modern sense of the term, despite the fact that it considered but one form of literature. By this work Warton achieved a certain permanence in literary remembrance which his poetry could never have given him.

During the eighteenth century we have the foundation of the literary clubs, a new departure which promised to

be of value to literary studies. Johnson founded one such club, which included Garrick, Percy, the Wartons, Steevens and Malone. The same period saw the foundation of the Bannatyne Club and the Roxburghe Society. Early in the century the foundation of the new Society of Antiquarians gave promise of literary interest by including in their list of proposed publications "Volumes of several English histories, not yet printed. A complete Anglo-Saxon Bible . . . of the use of music, interludes, masques and plays in England." Literary text, however, occupied their complete attention. Despite plans and much talk of the need for such a work, nothing was done for the history of literature, and Hallam's history is the next great event. Between this and the middle of the eighteenth century there is a gap of sixty years, during which there appeared a number of works, adequately labelled by Professor Saintsbury as "symptoms."

CHAPTER V

MINOR HISTORIANS BEFORE HALLAM

Between Warton and Hallam there was a considerable amount of literary historical writing. Much of this is hardly worth mentioning, but it forms part of the subject and shows at least a conscious attitude towards the history of literature. Lowndes attributes an anonymous "Catalogue of five hundred celebrated authors of Great Britain now living" (1788) to a writer named Marshall. The compiler attempted to destroy all the printed copies some years afterwards, showing himself to be a better critic than one would gather from his catalogue. Yet ten years later it was enlarged by Doctor Rivers and published anonymously as "Literary Memories of Living Authors of Great Britain"—different from the previous edition in size only. "Sketches of a History of Literature" (1794) by Robert Alves and "An Introduction to the Literary History of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century" (1798), attributed to the Rev. M. Philpot, are slight and not very important. They are healthy signs, however, of the growing interest in the subject. The first account of Scottish poetry was written at the time of Alexander Campbell (1764–1824), and published with a collection of songs in 1798. "An Introduction to the History of Poetry in Scotland from the beginning of the Thirteenth Century down to the Present Time" is not the work that the title might presuppose. Of poetry written before his time Campbell knew very little, and it is only when dealing

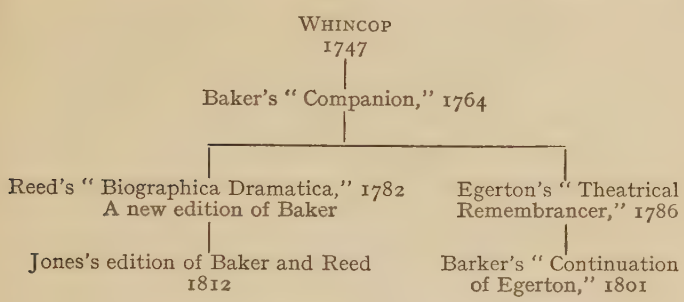
with his own contemporaries that Campbell displays any knowledge at all. Even that part of the work is mainly a collection of anecdotes. It is interesting to note that Campbell placed great faith in Macpherson, and states in this book that the Ossianic ballads were undoubtedly genuine.

Since Langbaine's "Dramatic Poets" the drama had received a great deal more attention than any other form of literature. Round the subject there had grown up a very tangled hedge of misguided attempts to write dramatic history. These efforts were written mainly as collections of short biographies of dramatists, or lists of plays containing a good deal of diffuse information mainly theatrical in its significance. The most useful among them are those confined entirely to bibliographical and histrionic facts. When genuine history was attempted the result was disastrous. An instance may be quoted of "A History of Dramatic Poets," which was published anonymously as a serial in the *Thespian Magazine* for 1793 to 1794. Thomas Hawkins's "Origin of the English Drama" (1773) was but a collection of plays arranged and annotated to show the development of the English drama.

The collections of data, already referred to, form a large body of work. One distinct group stands apart and it had a common parent in Thomas Whincop's "List of all the Dramatic Authors with some Account of their Lives" (1747), appended to a play "Scandenberg; or, Love and Liberty." The authorship is doubted and John Mottley (1692–1750) is quoted as the probable compiler (D.N.B.). Little is known of Whincop beyond the date of his death in 1730. His "Dramatic Authors" is a list of dramatists and their plays, divided into those living before, and those after the Restoration. David Erskine Baker (1730–1767)

elaborated on this and called the new work a "Companion to the Playhouse," published in 1764. New material was added to the "Companion" by Isaac Reed and published under the title "Biographica Dramatica" (1782). Exactly thirty years later it was again enlarged and brought up to date by Stephen Jones, Reed's title being preserved. By this time the original "Companion" had been considerably improved, and as a collection of material it is still quite valuable. Octavius Gilchrist criticised Jones's edition rather severely (*Quarterly Review*, 1812), charging him with reproducing the errors of the previous editions, adding material without acknowledging the source and treating living writers as "a kind of sacrosanct creature that like Sejanus 'requires our salutations twelve-score off.'" Jones defended himself in a pamphlet (nowadays extremely scarce) on the grounds that he had only been engaged to revise the previous editing and not to write an entirely fresh work, and making many counter-charges to Gilchrist's accusations of ignorance and incompetence. The whole controversy is written in a manner changing from lofty irony to bitter personal rudeness, which to-day seems impossible (except perhaps to Mr Hilaire Belloc) and is rather amusing.

Baker's réchauffé of Whincop had previously been incorporated into a further work entitled "The Theatrical Remembrancer: a complete list of all the dramatic performances in the English Language," and known as "Egertons," first published in 1788. W. C. Oulton continued it, incorporating Baker and Reed's "Biographica Dramatica" in 1801, the new edition being known as "Barker's continuation of Egerton's Theatrical Remembrancer." The following chart will show better the relationship between the rather curious group of books.



Mention must also be made of Benjamin Victor's " History of the Theatres of London and Dublin, 1730–1770 ; to which is added an annual register of all the plays, etc." (1761–1771). Victor wrote of contemporary events as they happened: thus we have the three volumes of his work spread over a decade. I quite imagine that he could have gone on indefinitely and with indefatigable industry had not the common fate of mankind supervened.

Journeyman writers and hacks as these men were, they collected the raw material of history, and by doing a good deal of heavy spade work they preserved contemporary dramatic events. They are not entirely reliable or accurate and rarely display any imagination, yet they are definitely part of the chain of dramatic literature that leads to Sir Adolphus Ward. Some very recent histories of the drama quote references and give a list of material. I find all of these works quoted beside their immediate offspring in Genest, Halliwell-Phillips's " Dictionary of old English Plays " (1860) and their modern form in " The Stage " Cyclopedia (1909). Fleay found Baker's " Biographica " of enormous use in his own work similar in aim but very different in nature.

Regular narrative form of dramatic history appeared for

the first time in Charles Dibdin's (1748–1814) "Complete History of the English Stage" (5 vols., 1800). Introduced by a comparative and comprehensive review of the "Asiatic, the Greek, the Roman, the Spanish, the Italian, etc., theatres." "Asiatic" sounds a little fabulous like the favourite "State of Poetry in China," and reads as if it were composed from the reports of mariners.

Dibdin deals largely with the theatre from the histrionic aspect, but his idea of the subject was not by any means clear. The drama as literature forms a part of his field of work, but painting and music are sandwiched into the history by intermediary chapters between sections. Dibdin had an idea of dealing with the different arts that have some bearing on the theatre. Laudable enough, yet in his case it produced no more than a very diffuse and disjointed account. He apparently had some knowledge of the theatre, but his ideas were rambling and vague and without any critical acumen. The common facts of dramatic history Dibdin ignored, and although the bulk of his "History" looks imposing, the larger portion is formed of anecdotes concerning actors and patrons. It must be admitted as the first narrative history to cover the whole range of the English drama (Warton did not include dramatic poetry), but later writers owed no debt to it in any form.

Among these pre-Hallam "symptoms," there is a work which stands above the rest: Joseph Berington's "Literary History of the Middle Ages, comprehending an account of the state of learning from the close of the Reign of Augustus to its revival in the Fifteenth Century." Berington was a Catholic priest. Born in 1746, he was educated for the priesthood at the College of St Omer, and ordained. Returning to England he became conspicuous for his

liberal theological views, which ended in temporary suspension from the practice of his calling. The author of a large number of works, mainly of a controversial nature, he published his literary history in 1814—his sole contribution to English scholarship. He died in 1827 (D.N.B., etc.). Berington's object was not a history as the word was then understood. He intended a philosophic survey of the rise and progress of learning and literature, identifying the growth of one with the other. The main idea, coming at the time, was a wonderfully liberal conception. Of the work, however, the actual execution falls short of the expectation.

The death of Augustus (A.D. 476) forms his commencing point, and from that date he traces the decline of literature. Charlemagne and the growth of the "Cycles" to the end of the tenth century form the next milestone. From the tenth century onwards literature is treated nationally. Berington binds history together with the passage of events, noting the influence of the comings and goings of the Crusades; the increased means of communication and the increased power of the Papacy by the foundation of the great religious orders. With the invention of printing Berington brings his literary history to a close. His criticism is that of a violent mind. Curiously situated in being a catholic and a critic of catholicity, and at the same time being violently opposed to any other form of religion, he is uniformly biased. Chaucer he views with disgust for his "gross descriptions and lascivious tales," although he admits that Chaucer may have qualities that weigh down any such considerations. A further example, Wyclif the Reformer, is treated with better grace than Duns Scotus the Franciscan. Yet Berington's work does not depend solely on these things. He stands midway

between Warton and Hallam, and produced the most creditable work of the kind during his own time.

In 1835 appeared "An Historical Sketch of the Origin of English Prose Literature," by William Gray, a very slight sketch of the rise of English prose which does not bear comparison with Minto's later work. In writing a preface for John Jones's "Attempts in Verse" (1831), Southey allowed a charitable motive to submerge criticism. Jones was a domestic servant with leanings towards poetry. His work was brought to the notice of Southey, who thought the addition of his own name to the title-page would enhance the monetary value of the volume. Jones's verse is extremely commonplace and very poor stuff. The tables were turned in the second edition and the book appeared as "Southey's Lives of the Uneducated Poets, to which are added attempts in verse by John Jones." The latest edition (J. S. Childers, 1925) has dropped the encumbrances altogether. Of course the idea itself cannot be defended on any ground. That poetry written by illiterate men should be remarkable merely because they *are* illiterate, does not bear consideration. Southey himself said that conditions in early England made no difference between peasant and master whether in writing or in any other pursuit. He ignores the fact that there is no early English poetry (yet known) similar to that of John Jones. Southey sketched the lives of Stephen Duck, James Woodhouse, Anne Yearsley, John Bryant and the poet of the volume. Peasants who were genuine poets, like Burns and John Clare, are, curiously enough, not mentioned. On the whole, it is little more than a literary curiosity.

The old tradition of the "Theatrical Remembrancer" type of work had one final impetus on a large scale before

bibliography and literary history were separately established. This was John Genest's (1764–1838) "Some Account of the English Stage in 1660–1830," published in ten volumes in 1832.

Genest did no more than chronicle the events of the English stage in the order of their happening. Both new productions and revivals are dealt with as they appeared on the stage, with the names of the cast and their parts. When a play appears for the first time a note is added containing some historical matter with quotations from the critics, as: Langbaine asserts this; Gildon states that, and so on. The principal interest of the work is not literary but theatrical, and it is really a collection of facts regarding the English stage embodying great research and edited with reliable accuracy.

Genest brings us roughly to the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century—three hundred years since Leland. Achievements in literary history had not been of the first importance with the exception of Warton. He still remained the only historian who produced a body of work which might justly be termed a history of literature. Even then, it must be remembered, he only occupied himself with poetry. It may be argued that the writers and compilers, so far dealt with, are not really worth noticing. Yet although their work was badly directed and without any very clear idea on the subject, they actually performed a useful purpose. They laid the foundation of literary history, and they form a part of the chain of events in literary historiography that led up to Hallam.

The beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria was a favourable time for any development of this nature. From about the time of the foundation of the British Museum Library in 1753, literary scholarship had made

great strides. There had been great activity in the study and printing of ancient manuscripts. Learned and publishing societies flourished in numbers during the first half of the century, the publishing societies being replaced in the latter half by the text societies. In 1825 the Royal Society of Literature received a royal charter which theoretically placed the society on the same footing as the Royal Society. An appropriation was granted from the Privy Purse, and the society was empowered to award annually two gold medals to writers of distinguished works. Hallam was one of the recipients, before the practice was discontinued. The society's services to literary scholarship, however, have not been of great importance, compared with activities of private foundations. In 1840 three important societies were founded, the Percy, Shakespeare, and Parker Societies, the first named being the first society to devote itself exclusively to the printing of English texts. The Philological Society (founded 1842) did a good deal of work with the Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, its crowning glory being the project for an English Dictionary, now realised in the Oxford English Dictionary. The Early English Text Society was founded later in 1865, but it is not intended to show here the development of learned societies. Their appearance in the literary world, however, is very valuable evidence of a conscious attitude towards literature, particularly in the more obscure and neglected periods. It shows that there were important bodies of men occupied solely with the question of literary preservation. The literary horizon had been very much broadened by the revival of romance, and those matters which formed Warton's largest defects were being rectified.

CHAPTER VI

HALLAM

The name of Henry Hallam occupies a singular place in English historiography. He was born at Windsor in 1777. Educated at Eton and Oxford, he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1799, and proceeded to read for the Bar. He was called and practised on the Oxford Circuit, but not for long, for, having married in 1807 and inherited the paternal estate, some years later he retired to study history. In 1818 appeared the "View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages," followed nine years later by the "Constitutional History of England." His third work, an "Introduction to the Literature of Europe, in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries," was published in 1837–1839. Hallam died in 1859, after some years of quiet decline. It rarely happens that a historian has such diverse interests as the progress of the Constitution and European literature. Hallam filled both of these rôles in works containing such solid qualities, that it is impossible to give any account of the English historians without including his name. He marks the beginning of the historical study of European literature in England, and he was the first English writer to place in an orderly account the literary events of the principal European nations. The "Introduction" does not cover all the years of European history. It is a study of the Renaissance and seventeenth-century literature.

Hallam prepares the ground by a sketch of the decline of learning after the Roman empire and the gradual passing

of learning from the school to the monastery. Ancient and revived literature, the profane and the sacred, are linked with the name of Boethius, "a man of fine genius." The literature of the fourteenth century continues the introduction to the concrete part of the work. In this early part of the history, Hallam is anxious to point to the causes of the revival of learning. In England the quick change from Norman-French to English after Mandeville produced a favourable atmosphere. In Italy, Petrarch stands at the fountain-head of a flood that spread over Europe. Then the establishing of schools of Law at Bologna and Medicine at Salerno; the foundation of the religious orders and the spread of manuscript copying, and the work of the scholars Anselm, Irnerius, and Gratian —thus Hallam proceeds to pave the way to some understanding of the events which produced with a gradual ascent the great rebirth of art and learning. After 1440 the literature of the fifteenth century is dealt with more minutely, and Hallam gives great prominence to the invention of printing and the events that were to follow, largely in consequence of the invention. The history goes on to the revival in Spain and Italy, supported mainly with liberal quotations from the literary historians of these countries. The state of learning in England filled Hallam with horror, and he says that in 1488 Cornelio Vitelli came to Oxford "in order to give that most barbarous university some idea of what was going forward the other side of the Alps." The beginning of the sixteenth century brings the "Introduction" to Melanchthon and Dunbar, and the beginning of the antiquarian scholarship; to Hallam, a more serious pursuit than the study of pure literature. More, "an ingenious rather than a profound mind," and Erasmus form a stepping-stone to the influence

of the Reformation, which Hallam interrupts to recount the revival of French learning under Francis I. The Biblical translators and Zwingli and Calvin continue the Reformation thread. The strict chronological treatment takes the history back to Wyatt and Surrey and the early English drama. The Catholicism of Mary Tudor is blamed for the decline in English literature after the reign of Elizabeth. In the following section, however, the Jesuits are said to form the link between theology and letters, and to have encouraged the study of literature in their schools. Dramatic literature in England and Spain brings the history to the first plays of Skakespeare and Lope de Vega, followed by the development of criticism and the novel. The moral philosophers (in which Hooker appears) and Montaigne link up a further fifty years of poetry. His opinion of Spenser's "Shepheard's Calendar" deserves quotation, "Though he has frequently neglected to observe the season even when it was most abundant in appropriate images," which for Hallam may be termed a typical remark.

Hallam shows himself as a strong adherent of Johnson in his praise of Cowley, who receives a long quotation from the "Lives." English poetry is continued through the Shakespearean sonnets, of which "it is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never written them." Wither, the cavaliers Suckling and Lovelace and the "Hesperides" of Herrick bring the history to Milton and Latin poetry in Europe. Milton is given more than ordinary praise perhaps for his Latin verse, for Hallam at all times regarded the use of the classic languages as something deserving more serious attention than the common vernacular. European literature from 1600–1650 covers some very important ground—Calderon, Corneille, the later plays of Shakespeare

and his contemporaries. This chapter is interesting as an example of the Shakespearean scholarship of nearly a century ago. The relation of Shakespeare's work to the Spanish and French dramatists is not considered at all. Sources and probable authorship of the doubtful plays are mainly ignored. Hallam only attempted to place the plays in an order of merit. The dramatic plots are outlined but in no case does Hallam quote text. Neither is the section improved by a review of Shakespearean criticism. Ben Jonson receives scant treatment compared with other dramatists. He is succeeded by Beaumont and Fletcher, " the discouri of our zodiac," and this is the best account in the whole work of any particular dramatists. The foreign influences are noted and examined, textual criticism is entered into and editions compared. The plays are written of at length (among which he includes the disputed " Two Noble Kinsmen ") and receive a very generous praise. Hallam displays a broader frame of mind here than one would expect from the views he expresses elsewhere. Ethical considerations are an important element in his criticism and he was obviously deeply shocked by Beaumont and Fletcher's coarseness, but on this occasion at least his final judgment is unbiassed. The rest of the Elizabethans, with the exception of Massinger, are merely mentioned. " Polite literature " is the author's term for anything that cannot be included under the head of philosophy or science. In the fifty years (1600–1650) under review it includes such diverse writings as Boccalini, Balzac, Burton, Bacon, Cervantes, and the early novels. The history continues on the same plan, the reader getting glimpses of literature between the high hedges of scientific, theological and philosophical literature and the progress of ancient learning. The sections that deal with these

subjects are very good, although Hallam's classification of writers under these headings might be challenged. In the last period of the history, 1650–1700, he includes the numismatic antiquarians and the study of chronology under the history of ancient literature. From ancient literature, Hallam proceeds to theology, philosophy and jurisprudence. The first-named subject is treated particularly well. Dupin, Fluery and Bossuet in France are considered with the Jansenists and Arminianism in England — Hammond, Locke and Wilkins, and the famous preachers. The concluding portion of the introduction deals mainly with pure literature—the English poets, including Waller, Butler and Dryden, and the later work of Milton. " Paradise Lost " is compared to the " Odyssey," Virgil, the " Pharsalia " and the " Thebaid," to Tasso, and, above all, Dante—a further example of the study of comparative literature before the present century. In the history of the Restoration drama which succeeds Milton, Hallam gives a fine chapter on Molière, but abuses the Restoration dramatists for their coarseness. " It might not be easy," Hallam says, " to find a scene in any comedy of Charles II's reign, where one character has the behaviour of a gentleman." A remark like this made as criticism introduces an almost comic element in the matter. From the modern aspect it gives an opportunity for uproarious parody. The prose section covers the first great critics and prose writers. With these critics and the " physical " writers, Hallam brings his history to a close with the end of the seventeenth century.

The method of planning and general arrangement are of particular interest in seeing how much future literary historians built and improved on it. Hallam divided the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries into strict arbitrary

periods of thirty years, lengthening them to fifty years in the following century. Within these short periods, literature is classified under six consecutive headings—ancient literature, theological literature, speculative philosophy, moral and political philosophy and jurisprudence, "polite" literature, and scientific and miscellaneous literature. These groups of subjects Hallam further divided into national sections. So the whole of European literature is classified into neat arbitrary squares of time, subject, and nationality.

In considering Hallam's work as a whole, it must never be forgotten that he was a pioneer. He possessed an abundance of erudition, though largely on the side of historical science. Byron's "Classic Hallam, much renowned for Greek" was a gibe, for a mistake made by Hallam in criticising severely some Greek verses in Knight's "Principles of Taste." Too late, Hallam discovered the verses were Pindar's. Not that Hallam lacked literary erudition, but his real feeling was for scholarship, and the main prop of the "Introduction" is the progress of learning. Much of the material was gained at second-hand, at times unavoidable, but parts of the work are a tissue of cuttings from Bouterweck, Eichorn and Tiraboschi.

The main defects are an arbitrary artificial division of literature and a disproportionate treatment of subject matter. Any classification of literature must always be a compromise with the limitations of written history. That is unavoidable, yet there are certain natural boundaries of literary periods which are very significant when used for literary history. Hallam's neat little parcels of thirty or fifty years are without reason. It means an alienation of work inspired by a prevailing literary impulse;

final considerations (as a whole) have to be passed over; and an author's work is divided by the intervening hurdles of other subject matter till the thread can be picked up later on. The disproportionate treatment of subject matter has already been touched upon. Hallam is at his best when dealing with scholarship, pure and simple. Even in that (although the mathematicians and anatomists are there) no mention is made of historians. The main prop of the history, as I have already said, is the progress of learning and the development of philosophy.

This attitude naturally affected Hallam's criticism. He was hampered by not possessing any genuine feeling for letters which he termed "Polite" literature. Ethical considerations abound, as we saw in the case of the Restoration dramatists. Examples could be given of particular lapses in taste and judgment which would avail nothing. His style is dry and often tedious. There is an occasional display of rhetoric, as in his eulogy of Boëthius. "Last of the classic writers, in style not impure, though displaying too lavishly that poetic exuberance which had distinguished the two or three preceding centuries, in elevation of sentiment equal to any of the philosophers, and mingling a Christian sanctity with their lessons, he speaks from his prison in swan-like tones of dying eloquence." (Professor Saintsbury has pointed to this passage in the "History of Criticism." As I had already noted it before reading Saintsbury, I leave it as it stands.)

These defects do not affect the final position of the "Introduction." Hallam stands for one of the most important events in the writing of English Literary History, and (if that idea of criticism is sound) in English criticism too. If the principal defect of criticism has been concerned with the ignorance of literary history, then Hallam may

be said to be the first English writer to attempt to remedy a serious defect. In any case, he was the first English writer to see Europe as one great literary federation—to plan and attempt to give synoptical views of European literature from the events that led up to the Renaissance and after. To the literary historian, if not also to the student of literature, Hallam will remain indispensable; to the critic (despite Hallam's staid correctness) a very healthy corrective in a matter where balance and impartiality are of first importance.

CHAPTER VII

MINOR HISTORIANS TO 1890

A GOOD deal has been said here of the biographical chronicles of English literature. It is a method which does not strike one as being particularly suited to its subject, and it is difficult to account for its persistence. Certainly, there can be no *real* reason for the popularity of the biographical history, even in the last century when access to material was a much easier matter than formerly. Between 1840 and 1870 two ambitious works of this kind were commenced—one by Thomas Wright, the other by Henry Morley, and both were left unfinished. Wright (1810–1877) called his book "Biographia Britannica Literaria," and planned to cover the whole of English literature. The first two volumes dealing with the "Anglo-Saxon Period" and the "Anglo-Norman Period" were published in 1842 and 1846 respectively, under the superintendence of the Royal Society of Literature, for whom Wright had undertaken the task. The author was an antiquarian of the most indefatigable industry. Most of his work, it is true, was directed towards Anglo-Saxon and medieval literature, but there is an unmistakable antiquarian flavour about his literary writings. The historical and antiquarian societies found him a very strong supporter. For them and for various patrons he edited hundreds of medieval manuscripts—work that is said to be unreliable and carelessly executed. His great enthusiasm, however, served some purpose in the growth of Anglo-Saxon studies. These first two volumes of the "Biographia"

are not of great value to the subject, but the work denotes a conscious desire to have a complete record of the national literature. Henry Morley's work will be dealt with later.

John Payne Collier (1787–1883) was another of the learned society group of scholars. In the same way as Wright he directed and assisted the establishment of certain new ventures, particularly the Percy and the Shakespeare societies. His work has suffered an almost total eclipse, not from any lack of erudition or critical faculty, but from a charge of dishonesty. Of course, some of it is quite sound, but where and at what time Collier began these forgeries is not known. It is thought that they first appeared in his "History of English Dramatic Poetry to the time of Shakespeare and the Annals of the Stage to the Restoration" (1831). Of this the present writer has no personal knowledge. Apart from the question altogether, the "English Dramatic Poetry" is a very interesting work and very superior to the existing literature of the drama.

From the miracle plays, dealt with in their original cycles, to the interludes and the rise of the tragedy and comedy, the history proceeds to the pre-Shakespearean dramatists. The method and classification are closely similiar to the first volume of Ward's "Dramatic Literature," and in these objective facts, at least, Collier was a road-maker. His work might have been more genuinely termed a study of pre-Shakespearean drama. It is nothing more—and the "Annals of the Stage" merely form an addition to the bulk of the work. This is not to disparage but to point out that we have not yet arrived at a study of the national drama in every aspect of its development. Collier's work was of great importance in being an account

of the early drama that showed special knowledge, and, further, it was written in a regular narrative form.

By breaking the chronological account of these historians we come at once to Collier's successor in dramatic history. This is Frederick Gard Fleay (1831–1909), author of "A Biographical Account of the English Drama" (1891). Fleay has a number of works to his credit, all having a bearing on dramatic literature. The "English Drama" alone has a literary historic interest.

He says in the course of the introduction (where some hard things are said about Halliwell-Phillipps and his dictionary of the drama) that this work is primarily akin to Langbaine, Baker and Reed. In most ways it is an advance upon them. Fleay was filled with a passion for the ordinary facts of dramatic history, thinking them to be of greater importance than mere philology. "The ideal of my work," he says, "would be reached if I could give for every play since the opening of the theatres to their closure . . . the author's name in each instance, the date of the original production, the theatre at which it was acted," and so on. He planned his work therefore on an ordinary dictionary plan, giving dramatic biographies with the usual list of works. This is not to be compared with Collier who (despite untrustworthiness) wrote a genuine history of the subject where Fleay compiled a work of reference. Contrasted, however, with the "Theatrical Remembrancer," it will be seen that the apparatus of dramatic study had vastly improved.

In 1843 Sir William Boyd published a "History of Literature" intended to cover the whole field of literature, from the "earliest ages of antiquity to the present time," which was to include the "state of science and fine arts." Three out of four volumes appeared when publication

ceased. As these volumes were devoted almost exclusively to Greek and Latin literature, the work did not promise anything more than a sketch of national literatures, and what was published was of a practically negligible nature.

George L. Craik (1798–1866) had a considerable success with a "History of Literature and Learning in England" (1844), which was expanded into a "History of English Literature and the English Language" (1861), part of this history being further amplified into a "History of English Literature from the Norman Conquest" the following year. These books had many editions, but the paucity of "manuals" of English literature at this time gave them a contemporary value they no longer possess. Craik was hopelessly pre-occupied with language and learning, which in a work of such limited size shouldered out the final purpose of literary history.

Of a similar kind, and contemporary with Craik's book, was the "Outlines of English Literature" (1845) by Thomas B. Shaw (1813–1862), which nineteen years later Doctor William Smith edited as "A History of English Literature." It is without any particular merit, and is very much at fault in the absence of bibliographical details. The "Outlines" helped to supply a practical need, in the same way as William Spalding's (1809–1859) "History of English Literature" (1853). Craik is not by any means a literary historian, but at least his attempts are better criticism and better history than these last two.

Thomas Arnold challenges an important point in his "Short History of English Literature," later expanded into a "Manual of English Literature" (1862). Arnold stated in the preface to the first edition that criticism was not the business of the historian. The "Short History" itself is a sufficient proof of the fallacy

of such a statement. Arnold in the enlarged edition added a critical part, keeping history and criticism separate in a manner which half admitted a change of views. The addition added very little to a work of very slight pretentions to genuine literary history.

One most important aspect of Victorian literary scholarship (apart from the learned societies) was the editing and publishing of literary texts in popular form. Behind this movement for a wider appreciation of literature was the enthusiasm of a few men, both scholars and publishers. Conspicious among them was Henry Morley (1822–1894), who after a varied career which included medicine, teaching and journalism, became Professor of English Language and Literature at King's College, London. In the historical study of English literature he wrote the first and part of a second volume of "English Writers" (1864 and 1867), and "A First Sketch of English Literature" (1873). In 1887 he recommenced the "English Writers" in a fresh form, completing ten volumes, an eleventh being finished from his notes and published posthumously (D.N.B. account). The "First Sketch" in its final form (twelfth edition) covers the entire ground of English literature, this edition being supplemented by E. N. Edmunds, to bring the history down to the deaths of Swinburne and Meredith. The "English Writers" was planned on a very large scale. The eleventh volume only reaches to Shakespeare and the court of James I, and Morley's death, when but half of the work was completed, spoilt his attempt to chart on a large scale the field of English literature. No writer, before or since, has attempted anything on such a large scale, and it was left for a syndicate of writers to execute a history on a similar scale. Not that any comparison can be made between the "Cambridge" History

and the " English Writers." Morley's work was compiled on a biographical system of individual authors and, judging from the existing portion, he was unable to see English literature from a wide point of view.

Morley's name is best remembered for the " First Sketch of English Literature." It has been, and still is, a work of unfailing popularity. It has many limitations, which are the limitations of Morley himself. The " First Sketch " is badly arranged with a division of literature by the accession and death of reigning kings. There is very little attempt at criticism and a large element of biography. Morley's early training gave him no real equipment for such a task on a grand scale. What he wanted to do was to display English literature in an orderly fashion, and as far as that goes the " First Sketch " fulfilled its purpose. His enthusiasm for letters was unbounded, and he stands in a very dignified position among a number of lesser men.

Beyond Gray's worthless account English prose had not at this time received any special attention from historians. William Minto (1845–1893) partially fulfilled this want with " A Manual of English Prose Literature " (1872). Two years later this was followed by the " Characteristics of English Poets," and in 1894 he published a further work on the " Literature of the Georgian Era " (1894). The " English Prose " is his most important work and contains some very fine material on the qualities of prose writing. In fact a large portion of the manual is concerned with qualities of style only, and that part which might be termed literary history is a division of prose literature under the headings of certain distinctions in style of composition.

Minto does not figure to any extent among literary historians, nor does John Earle, who also wrote on

"English Prose" (1890) and "Anglo-Saxon Literature" (1884). The first-named work, like Minto's, deals largely with the art of writing rather than its history. Very little can be said about Earle's "Anglo-Saxon Literature," except that it is a sign of the beginnings of specialised literary history. Its strongest recommendation probably lies in its still being part of the literary student's equipment. Thus far the development of English literary history was not particularly rapid. In the sixty years after Hallam nothing of outstanding importance was written, and we are left with the thirty years in which a fairly complete system of literary history has been built up in England.

CHAPTER VIII

CO-OPERATIVE HISTORY AND ITS CONTRIBUTORS TO 1900—SNELL, GARNETT, GOSSE, WALKER, ETC.

From 1890 to 1900 English literary history developed more rapidly. During these ten years those works were written which stand as a permanent contribution to the history of our literature, and perhaps the most important element in modern criticism. William J. Courthope was writing the "History of English Poetry"; Sir Adolphus William Ward, the enlarged edition of the "English Dramatic Literature"; Professor Saintsbury had already a long list of works behind him with the "History of Criticism" a year or two ahead.

These are but the main figures among a host of historians. So far this thesis has included certain writers, of themselves unimportant, but occupying a certain position owing to the rarity of similar contemporary writings. It will now be found necessary to exclude these historians whose contributions to the subject are not of some permanent value in history and criticism.

One entirely fresh feature of this development was the adoption of a system of co-operative history—that is, history written by a syndicate of writers under a general editor who defines the exact scope and method of the contributions to the final work.

The pros and cons of co-operative history have been postponed for consideration under the "Cambridge"

History of English Literature, mainly because the work under consideration is based on a simpler system than the "Cambridge," which, being a highly specialised development of the method, involves larger issues.

Between the years 1895 and 1903 Professor John Hales edited a history of English literature, under the general title of "Handbooks of English Literature." It comprised ten divisions (in separate volumes) termed: "The Age of Alfred," "Chaucer," "Transition," "Shakespeare," "Milton," "Dryden," "Pope," "Johnson," "Wordsworth," and "Tennyson." The first three volumes were contributed by F. J. Snell. J. W. Allan collaborated with Thomas Seccombe in the "Age of Shakespeare," and the last-named author wrote the "Johnson" volume. Milton's period was surveyed by J. B. Masterman, and the "Dryden" by Doctor Richard Garnett. John Dennis contributed "The Age of Pope," whilst Professors Herford and Walker wrote the "Wordsworth" and "Tennyson" ages respectively.

The largest contribution to the series, dealing with the subject up to the time of Spenser, was written by F. J. Snell in the volumes named above, thus relieving these volumes of some of the awkward features of co-operative work. The author continued the same part of the subject in his "Fourteenth Century," written for the "Periods of European Literature." The division of the subject matter is on a rather too rigid plan of water-tight compartments of literary forms. This was possibly conditioned by the co-operative system and the need for some definite system of arrangement. One feature of these histories are the long introductions to each volume sketching the historical and social background, and achieving a bird's-eye view of the condition of contemporary England

generally. The editor, Professor Hales, contributed a quite important share in the general work on these lines. In considering this history as a whole, it is a really fine achievement in a certain confined space and no better "series" history has yet been edited. It is not possible, on account of the slightness of their work, to consider individually the contributors who have not appeared otherwise as literary historians. Thomas Seccombe, Doctor Garnett, and Professor Walker have all made considerable contributions to the subject, and their work will be considered as a whole, including that of Doctor Garnett's collaborator, Sir Edmund Gosse.

Thomas Seccombe (1866–1923), beside writing the "Age of Johnson" and his part authorship of "The Age of Shakespeare," collaborated with Sir William Robertson Nicoll in "A History of English Literature." Originally published in periodical parts under this title, it appeared in book form as the "Bookman History of English Literature" (1905–6). It is so obviously written to be "popular," in the worst sense of the word, that the two smaller works form a much surer claim to the title of historian. Which part of "The Age of Shakespeare" was written by Thomas Seccombe, and in what particular direction his share in the work lay, the author does not say. It forms a very complete survey of Elizabethan literature and is followed by Canon Masterman's history of the years 1632 to the Restoration. The "Dryden" volume of Dr Richard Garnett considers the transition in English literature after the restoration of the monarchy. The same writer also wrote a "History of Italian Literature" (1911), and with Sir Edmund Gosse wrote the "Illustrated Record of English Literature" (4 vols., 1903). The collaboration consisted in Dr Garnett writing the first two volumes and Sir Edmund

Gosse the remainder. The distinguishing feature of the "Record" was a mass of illustrative material, portraits, pictorial matter, facsimiles of manuscripts and title pages, mainly extremely rare and of great value to the subject. It purports to be no more than a "Record" covering the principal names in English literature, and the method adopted by the two authors suited this purpose extremely well. Doctor Garnett's preface revealed the right attitude for such a task. He says: "That the study of literary history will generally be profitable in proportion to the student's acquaintance with the history of the nation itself." This assumes that at least one aspect of the work is in the right direction. His criticism is not of a very distinguished or particular kind, and in this work consisted mainly the selection of writers to be included in the "Record." The method used was largely on a plan of individual treatment of authors, particularly with a separate treatment of biography rather on the lines of "Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature." The general scheme is based on very broad groups of writers, and the keynote of the "Record" is a wide general outlook on literature.

The two volumes written by Sir Edmund Gosse (1849-1928) are of course based on the general principles of the work, and he is not nearly so distinctive within those boundaries as in the "History of Eighteenth Century Literature" (1889) and a "History of Modern English Literature" (1897). "Modern" is used in its widest sense and refers to literature written from Chaucer onwards. The latter has an importance that is not possessed by any other of its author's historical works, because it embodies his matured convictions on the function of criticism. His main thesis is against an "individualist" method of

criticism. He wrote: "Mr Herbert Spencer, with infinite courage, opened the entire world of phenomena to the principles of evolution, but we seem slow to admit them into the little province of æsthetics. . . . But it is surely time that we should recognise only two criteria of critical judgment. The first is primitive, and merely clears the ground of rubbish; it is: Does the work before us or the author perform what he sets out to perform with a distinguished skill in the direction in which his powers are exercised? If not, he interests the higher criticism not at all; but if yes, there follows the second test. Where, in the vast and ever shifting scheme of literary evolution, does he take his place, and in what relation does he stand . . . who are of his own kith and kin?" "I desire," he continues, "to state my conviction that the only way to approach the subject with instruction is to regard it as part of the history of a vast living organism. . . . Every producer of vital literature adds an off-shoot to the unrolling and unfolding organism of literary history, in its ceaseless processes of growth." Can such a scientific theory be applied to literature as a whole? This critic does not imply that the forces, which operate on the growth of natural phenomena, operate in some reflected way on the growth of literature. He desires that the critic should see, in literature, a living organism which evolves by a similar process as natural phenomena. To discuss this theory in its scientific aspect would enter into a region of thought with which the present writer is not familiar. The important point is: by what method of reasoning shall the critic attempt to find a writer's place in the "ever shifting scheme of literary evolution?" On what shall he base his assumptions that a piece of literature has some definite place in the vast mass of literature? These are

pertinent questions which Sir Edmund Gosse does not answer in the "History of Modern English Literature." The great and all-important aspect of this theory is the universal aspect of letters. Judged by the result in these histories of literature, this feature is most predominant—that is, the universal aspect of letters that this theory connotes. When this critic thinks of Shakespeare, he views him as expressing the same qualities of national character as Dante, Calderon, Molière and Goethe. When judging Milton as *the* epic poet of English literature, his mind's eye sees at the same time Tasso, Ariosto and Camoens. That is most important in summing up these works. Yet, they do not represent the author's best work. They appear to me to depend on a study of individual writers that form stepping-stones across the stream of literature. These individuals are viewed in the broadest and most federal way, yet they are studies of the individuals themselves. Sir Edmund Gosse may be compared to St Beuve, and similarly he writes charming and delicate studies of different writers. In this direction, rather than in a general historical survey, his particular genius finds a finer expression. If this work appears to be treated in undue length (in relation to Gosse's contributions to the subject), it must be borne in mind that history and criticism are closely related, and his prominent position in criticism demands some slight analysis of his general theories.

The final contributor to the "Handbooks of English Literature" was Hugh Walker (1855–), Professor of English Literature at Lampeter. "The Age of Tennyson" is but one work among a number in which Professor Walker has made himself the particular historian of the Victorian era in literature. There are "The Greater

Victorian Poets" (1895), "The Literature of the Victorian Age" (1910), and the "Outlines of Victorian Literature," in collaboration with Mrs Hugh Walker (1913). Further, he contributed two chapters to the "Cambridge" History dealing with the same period.

These works all centre round the author's principal work, "Literature of the Victorian Era." Regarding only the objective side of history, this appears a thorough survey of the period. There is, however, a peculiar feature in the arrangement of literature under the headings of speculative thought, creative art, prose fiction, and a section termed "Et cetera." The introduction is probably the best part of the book. Here the author sketches the background of European literature, and the influence of German thought brought to a final head with Carlyle. As a whole, it is very restricted by the compartments of literary production, and this affects its critical value. Professor Walker's criticism is competent and mainly just, but it has a dry academic flavour with no distinguishing character that the reader is aware of. The Victorian era has not been this writer's only concern. He wrote "The English Essay and Essayists" (1915) and "English Satire and Satirists" (1925) for a series of books edited by Oliphant Smeaton, under the title of "Channels of English Literature." These can hardly be termed co-operative history, but were a series of books designed to cover the national literature with histories of the different forms of literary expression. Professor Saintsbury lent his aid with a history of the English novel (to be referred to later), and a certain amount of fresh material appeared on specialised lines, as Waldo Dunn's "English Biography" and James Seth's "English Philosophers and Philosophy." With the exception of

Professors Walker and Saintsbury, none of the contributors were literary historians as the term is used here. An exception to this is Felix Schelling, the most prominent American authority on the English drama, who contributed a volume on that subject to the series.

The development of historical writing by a syndicate of writers opened up many fresh possibilities, which for literary history culminated in the " Cambridge " History. The system has produced much valuable material of a specialised kind and the growth of literary history has been assisted very materially. Co-operative history defeats any really adequate criticism by its joint authorship, and one can note only the general scope and plan of such works. The disadvantages of co-operative authorship are always on the side of criticism and synoptical views; the advantages are those that come from specialised knowledge within a limited field of work. The chronological progress of literary history has necessarily been broken here in order to group together minor historians and material of a more or less similar nature. This account now goes on to deal with the greater figures in literary historical writing, and no name stands higher than that of Professor Saintsbury.

CHAPTER IX

SAINTSBURY

When considering as a whole the production of English literary historians from 1890 onwards, it must be remembered that the lesser figures who have been viewed in the last section did not stand alone. Those who wrote between 1830 and 1890 were working without the impetus that was given to the study of literary history, after these years, by the researches of historians on a much larger scale. From this time and onwards the question of literary history became an entirely different one, because of the body of work that was perfecting the art of literary history and formed a complete survey of English literature. Research had brought to light an enormous mass of reliable material. Bibliography had ceased to attempt universal work on the lines of Conrad Gesner, and had commenced to narrow its field of work to national literature and individual authors. Watts and Lowndes had both compiled a bibliography of English literature, and a number of lesser compilers like Richard Herne Shepherd had produced work of some very definite practical value. A further sign of the times was the founding of the Bibliographical Society in 1892. Perhaps this was the outcome of the fashion for book collecting which had reached large proportions by this time, but it made a very strong friend for the historian of literature. Collective biography had grown from Berkenhout and Chalmers to the "Dictionary of National Biography," under the editorship of Leslie Stephen and Professor Sidney Lee. The learned and

literary societies had published a large amount of rare literary text. Early manuscripts and documents were printed (some for the first time) under the editorship of particular authorities, and the Government Rolls series opened fresh avenues for research.

The slighter productions of those years have already been glanced at. High, even among the three important contemporary historians, is the name of George Edward Bateman Saintsbury (born 1845). Professor Saintsbury's bibliography is both long and formidable. "A Short History of French Literature" (1882) was followed in five years' time by "A History of Elizabethan Literature." In 1896 appeared "A History of Ninteenth Century Literature," and in 1898 "A Short History of English Literature." The three volumes of the "History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe" were published during the years 1900–1904, and the "History of English Prosody," 1906–1910. The same subject was followed in "A Historical Manual of English Prosody" in the same year as the appearance of the last volume of the foregoing, and two years later he published "A History of English Prose Rhythm." That part of the "History of Criticism," which referred to England only, was extended and revised into a separate volume in 1911, under the title of "A History of English Criticism." "The English Novel" (1913) written for Oliphant Smeaton's "Channels of English Literature" and "The Peace of the Augustans" (1915), with a very large contribution to the "Cambridge" History, completed Professor Saintsbury's work for national literary history. From 1897 to 1908 he edited a co-operative history of European literature, under the general title of "Periods of European Literature," for which he personally wrote "The Flourishing of Romance and the

Rise of Allegory" (1897), "The Earlier Renaissance" (1901), and "The Later Nineteenth Century" (1908). He returned to French literature with "A History of the French Novel" (1917 and 1919). No mention is made here of those monographs on men of letters, collections and anthologies, books on subjects so diverse as letter-writers and wine drinking, which are outside the present purpose. Professor Saintsbury's industry and learning, however, are so great that it is impossible to consider individually his contributions to the history of English and European literature. It is not only work of great value and importance, but a justification of the author's personal literary and critical beliefs—a proof of the applicability of his method of criticism and attitude towards the art of letters.

"The History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe" has an importance of its own among Prof. Saintsbury's writings. It is the only occasion in which he has given a practical expression to his belief in a confederation of the literary world by his own individual work, without a syndicate of writers. It is a history of criticism as part of the art of writing and a history of critical theories. Further, the author's own view of criticism is definitely stated and embodied, and the work is really a key to the whole of Professor Saintsbury's historico-critical and purely critical writings.

Hallam's method of planning received some consideration in a previous section. It is natural to compare these two historians in that regard. Where Hallam carved European literature into neat little allotments of periods of fifty years, Professor Saintsbury has attempted to fix the boundaries by the ebb and flow of the tides of literary thought. There are eight main divisions: Greek, Latin,

the Renaissance, the neo-classic, the eighteenth century, the dissolution of neo-classicism, the reconstruction of criticism, and the later nineteenth cenury. There are, of course, further divisions conditioned by language. The whole scheme cannot fail to give the reader the exact idea that literary history should convey. Here is something which has grown gradually; that is alive and fluctuates under the influence of general forces; that has with labour pefected an art and then has been swayed in another direction to perfect itself under changed forms.

Criticism is considered from its fountain-head in Greek and Latin literature. The European critics are each considered in their particular time and by the side of their own contemporaries. Their theories and method of arriving at judgments are placed side by side, but not in order to prove their reasoning false. The author himself has a very definite theory of criticism which is stated in this book. As a theory it agrees not entirely with any previous ideas of the subject. Yet, there is no attempt to make his own theory a sort of a priori standard, against which every other critic is measured. Every writer is considered and compared with his contemporaries and predecessors, and his personal contribution to criticism is judged by what it stands for in relation to others. In the final summary, the conflicting opinions of the period are unravelled and general conclusions drawn from them. This system of generalising by the means of "inter-chapters" is a device that Professor Saintsbury has used with great success in most of his works. It allows a summing up of generalities and ideas which would impede the progress of the history in its purely objective part.

Reference has already been made to the particular critical method embodied in this work. It has also been

made the base of some remarks in the introduction, and in considering any work of Professor Saintsbury's it must be taken into consideration. It forms a sort of sheet-anchor to modern criticism, and for the literary historian it is of paramount importance. The foundation of his ideas is a knowledge of literature. That means the study of the history of literature (here is the corollary between history and criticism) and complete reading. "He [the critic] must read, and as far as possible read everything—that is the first and great commandment." The author goes on to impress that if one period or one author of real, no matter how little, importance is missed, the critic is in danger of putting his views out of focus. Neither is reading finished with the national literature, some account of other literature must also be taken. "Secondly, he must constantly compare books, authors, literatures indeed, to see in what each differs from each." Lastly, the critic, when approaching a book, must attempt to divest his mind of any idea as to "what a book *ought to be*, until he has seen what it is." This is where Professor Saintsbury's singular position arises. He has stated a method of criticism arrived at after a survey of European criticism from Plato, depending on a complete system of literary history and a universal confederation of literature. "The History of Criticism" embraces all these points. That which was most lacking for the practice of such a theory, namely, the history of literature, Professor Saintsbury has supplied himself on a very large scale. Criticism he holds to be largely a matter of sense, used in the strict term of the word. All philosophy, as applied to criticism (particularly by the French critics), he discards, and he distrusts the interpretation and criticism of literature through a certain *milieu*. This includes the

consideration of economic and social forces, as formative influences, although it cannot be denied that these facts of common history are part of the literary historian's background.

When dealing with the national literature in the " Short History of English Literature " he left aside any consideration of these forces, although more ample works like the " Peace of the Augustans " contain an excellent picture of the mode and contemporary social life. The first-named work is thought of in comparison with Morley's earlier and much longer history. How much it gains from a national method of arrangement, and by a critic who regarded literature first and the writer afterwards, can hardly be over-estimated. On particular points, certain aspects are over-stated. For example, Saintsbury's strong interest in prosody provokes him to write, " Sometimes Barclay permits himself a full Alexandrine; often (in fact in the majority of cases) he lengthens out his line with trisyllabic feet, so arranged as sometimes to take very little heed of the Iambic basis." And again, " It is wholly in the Skeltonian dimeter or monometer which, it should be observed, has a tendency now and then to fall into six syllabled Iambics." . . . Remember, this is a short history and such a close regard for form is not an essential part of the history of literature. A further fault might be found on the grounds of redundant biographical facts, considering the restricted space. Any general considerations largely affect his work as a whole and will be reserved for a general summary.

In the " History of Elizabethan Literature," " The Peace of the Augustans," and the " History of Nineteenth Century Literature," three consecutive periods of English literature were chronicled. These three books form a

most interesting contrast of the author's manner. The first and the last-named were written for a series of books (apparently without an editor) designed to cover the whole field. They are therefore written to a certain defined scope, and are not in themselves particularly individual. "The Peace of the Augustans" is literary history with a difference. Professor Saintsbury has never attempted to hide personal predilections, although they have never interfered with his judgments. The "Augustans" is an expression of a personal taste and definitely written with the purpose of showing the eighteenth century to be "a comfortable solid creature . . . good for working and playing in." The absence of purely objective facts appears to lessen the strictly historical atmosphere. It is literary history in a more expansive mood. The length of the work and the unravelling of many critical tangles gives him latitude for an occasional dig in the ribs of the Whigs of the eighteenth century.

The novel had several historians before Saintsbury, but Dunlop's "History of European Fiction" dealt mainly with the romances and early tales, and Professor Raleigh ignored the early romances and ended his "English Novel" with Scott. Professor Saintsbury's "English Novel" covered both these points, and, until the first volume of a very recent work was published, stood as the only complete study of this particular literary form.

In regarding prosody from the historical point of view, the author followed the strong interest in metric forms that appeared in the "English Literature." Never before had any serious attention been paid historically to this aspect of writing. The historic development and growth of metres and rhythm is a special aspect of literary development, and in the "History of English Prosody" and

"History of English Prose Rhythm" a new body of evidence was brought to light for historical purposes. The "Historical Manual of English Prosody" was adapted for practical purposes from the larger history. These studies form a complement to the records of literature and open an interesting avenue for investigation. They demand a more serious consideration than is now possible for this account must be kept to the regular paths.

Mention has already been made of the "Periods of European Literature" (12 volumes), edited by Professor Saintsbury, to which he contributed the three volumes mentioned previously. The whole scheme was to spread European literature over a number of periods, each dealt with by a writer specially qualified to deal with that particular period. The method of co-operation was exactly similar to that used in certain other series previously examined. Each period is dealt with in a separate volume with a distinctive title, as Professor W. P. Ker's "Dark Ages" or David Hannay's "Later Renaissance." The other contributors were F. J. Snell, G. G. Smith, Professors H. J. C. Grierson and O. Elton, J. H. Millar, T. S. Omond, and Professor C. E. Vaughan. It is not proposed to examine these individually, although some of the historians receive individual consideration elsewhere. The principal interest is in considering the advance of writing European literary history since Hallam. A similar comparison has been made in reference to the "History of Criticism," and what was said there refers in a larger measure to this same series.

From a practical aspect the "Periods of European Literature" is very superior to Hallam. Much of his material was gained at second hand from the literary historians and much of his reading was through trans-

lations. In certain cases (as Icelandic literature) the present writers had to adopt the same expedient, but as a whole the subject matter is of a more original nature and drawn from direct sources.

In considering Professor Saintsbury's work generally, this service to literary history stands out prominently. He has recognised the importance and literary significance of the purely technical side of writing history. He has bridged the gulf between history and criticism, by which both have benefited to a very large extent. It has been seen that his critical beliefs depend on literary history, and it may be said that literary history as such depends also on criticism. There is no philosophy in this, and the author fully intended that such should be the case, and that criticism should be placed among matters of common sense. The influence of this solid growth of historical literary studies and the founding of a complete system of English literary history has had some importance in the development of modern criticism. An attempt will be made to point out certain indications of this in the final section of this thesis. But despite Professor Saintsbury's labours and his great learning, he has never lost his very human qualities. His riotous enjoyment in books, his wilfully personal predilections and the delightful " asides " lighten the weight of his heaviest volumes. The same characteristic is observable in his style. The far too frequent use of parenthesis and the weakness for metaphor and obscure allusions are outstanding points in a style that cannot be defended on any grounds. Above all, the obscure allusions are a constant irritant to the reader, who is not a familiar of the common rooms of the larger provincial universities.

Professor Saintsbury is said to be a Tory, so advanced

in views as to be out of the range of practical politics. Of that the present writer has no personal knowledge. Yet it is apparent that it has never interfered with any final judgment on an author's work, and that no personal predilection has interfered with the balance of his judgments. By this work and the work of two of his contemporaries the keystone of the bridge of literary history was at this late date finally hauled into position.

CHAPTER X

COURTHOPE

THE Oxford Chair of English Poetry has been held by the two great historians of English poetry, Warton and Courthope. When the "History of English Poetry" came to be written in the last years of the nineteenth century, Warton (in a considerably patched-up condition) was still the authoritative history of English poetry. Dramatic poetry had been treated separately by Collier, Fleay and Ward, but the general history of English poetry still remained in a work over a hundred years old.

William J. Courthope (1842–1917) was appointed to the Chair of English Poetry in 1895, the year of the publication of the first volume of "A History of English Poetry." His statutory Oxford lectures were published under the title of "Life in Poetry, Law in Taste" (1900). This book, some verse and two fine chapters (particularly the "Spenser" chapter) contributed to the "Cambridge" History of English literature, are the extent of his literary output. The history was not completed until 1910, when the final volume appeared.

No writer approached literary history with a more definite idea of subject and treatment. Courthope based his work on an arbitrary definition of English poetry, and it is written with a certain philosophical view of history. From the principles he laid down in the introduction to the history, Courthope never departed in the smallest sense, and, among English literary historians, he is the most explicit as to his material and methods. Courthope de-

fined English poetry as " metrical compositions written in our language from the period at which it becomes fairly intelligible to readers of the present day." On this definition all pre-Chaucerian poetry is excluded, and Chaucer's literary inheritance is considered to be from " the poetry of races of partial Latin descent." Whether this theory can be borne out or not is not the present purpose to enquire, but it limits the scope of the work from Chaucer to Scott. The history of literature is seen as " not simply an appreciation of the motives by which the individual poet seems to have been consciously inspired," but also an enquiry into those general causes which have consciously " directed imagination in this country into various channels of metrical compositions." This means that the unity of literary history is sought for in the national life as a whole ; in the examination of the larger outside forces, economic and social, which have exerted an influence on contemporary thought and feeling. No history of literature can be written without these considerations, but in the case of Courthope it leads him often to an insistence on the *subject* matter of poetry. He seeks to identify the coincidence of periods of historic brilliance and outbursts of literary expression, and to find that these periods " come to a close as the energy and enthusiasm of the national movement exhaust themselves." But Courthope does not confine his survey of historic forces to England alone. Each period of literature is approached through a wide survey of the Western world generally and the advance of intellectual and moral ideas and expression in the countries of Europe.

When Courthope planned his work, he had before him two examples, the unused Pope-Gray plan (see introduction) and Warton's. Warton, of course, was not to be ignored, particularly as his work had been the only history

of English poetry for so long a period. It was discarded by Courthope for the antiquarian bias Warton displayed, and he adopted the Pope-Gray plan with considerable modifications. These were: the elimination of Anglo-Saxon poetry and the discarding of Gray's labels of French and Italian schools. Courthope considered the "Schools" existed only in a metaphor borrowed from the art of painting, which suggests that the poets grouped under them were separated from each other "by external differences more profound than was actually the case." Any similar classification is avoided. There are certain broad headings which are identified by external factors. The first volume covers: The Middle Ages; Influence of the Roman Empire; The encyclopædia education of the Church; The feudal system. Volume two: The Renaissance and the Reformation; Influence of court and universities. Volume three: The intellectual conflict of the seventeenth century; Decadent influence of the feudal monarchy; Growth of national genius. Volume four: The development and decline of the poetic drama; Influence of court and people. Volume five: The constitutional compromise of the eighteenth century; Effects of classical Renaissance; The early Renaissance. Volume six: The romantic movement in English poetry; Effects of Revolution. The treatment of authors is chronological, modified by the need for general consideration and the separate treatment of dramatic poetry. The smaller divisions of poets under the broad headings have a certain critical importance, as an instance, the followers of Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Brown and Davies, etc., are placed into three groups of "theological," "metaphysical," and "court" wit. By ignoring Warton and revising the Pope-Gray plan, Courthope avoided

antiquarianism and produced a plan which has a literary significance.

It has been stated here more than once that literary history implies a certain theory of literary criticism, and that the one is to a certain extent dependent on the other. Courthope expressed very fully what he considered to be the function of criticism both in the "History" and in his Oxford lectures "Life in Poetry, Law in Taste." Criticism he defined as a process of inductive thinking: "The business of historical criticism is to trace the stream of thought that connects age with age and the almost imperceptible graduations which mark the advance of language and metrical harmony"; and again: "It is the business of historical criticism to discover the reason for these fluctuations of taste." That expressed the frame of mind in which Courthope approached poetry. He is not concerned principally with the individual significance of each particular poet, but with how deeply he is rooted into the common soil of the larger field of historic forces. Motives of purely personal inspiration do not concern him. He is concerned with tracing the stream of poetic thought through the ages of English literature and in searching for the causes of the ebb and flow in literary expression. In the last volume Courthope summed up his complete attitude toward the subject.

"The first volume dealt with the embryonic processes by which, in midst of Catholic surroundings, was formed a nucleus of general ideas and language fitted to become the groundwork of metrical art. It showed how, on a dialect of the dominant Saxon vocabulary, the invention of the Anglo-Norman poet improved metrical forms derived from France and imaginative conceptions reflecting

feudal and ecclesiastical forms of life, and how, in course of time, these elements were developed by Chaucer into the comprehensive picture of living society presented in the 'Canterbury Tales.' We saw, too, reflected in the allegory of 'Piers the Ploughman,' the dominant tending of the nation to break away in spiritual matters from the central authority of the Pope. The silent decay of the institution of chivalry was noted in the changing forms of allegorical poetry, the immediate product of the medieval genius; on the other hand, the advance of the infant drama from the purely ecclesiastical Miracle Play to the more secular interest of the Morality pointed to the growing predominance of the civil over the ecclesiastical element in the constitution of society. In the four following volumes an endeavour has been made to describe the gradual rise of a body of national poetry, mainly inspired by the genius of the Renaissance, out of a series of intellectual conflicts, caused in the heart of the nation by its severance from the central European system—the conflict, that is to say, between Catholicism and Protestantism, between Feudalism and Civil Law, between Absolutism and the rising spirit of Democracy; in a word, between the forces of Liberty and those of Authority. In this concluding volume our gaze must be turned once more from the contemplation of a purely national development to the spectacle of the general movement of things in Europe at large" (6, p. 4). The author goes on to examine the Absolutism in France under Napoleon, etc. There is no attempt to judge really critically by methods of comparison. The only comparison made by Courthope is that between poetry and life of the nation and Europe generally. This bland, aloof attitude has led Courthope into an unduly long treatment of certain poets, such as

Churchyard, Garth, and John Phillips. His method demanded a complete examination of a poet's work, no matter how much it may suffer from comparison. Yet, as a philosophic examination of literature, there is nothing to rival this work in the English language. It is so magnificently *federal* in point of view that any reproach against the work as literary history pure and simple would be fault-finding. The author's conclusions on matters of scholarship have been attacked by various critics, particularly in regard to the doubtful Shakespearean plays concerning which he makes a number of controvertible statements. The examination of these points is not the purpose of this thesis. The important point is this, can a philosophic theory of historical criticism be applied without running a very grave risk of reading into literature a meaning that the author never intended? Inductive reasoning may be very sound, but can it be applied to literature? I have stated my opinion, that the social and economic forces are part of the background of any historical literary study. But not in the sense that Courthope has used them. He has gone a great deal deeper and sought to form judgments on literature through a certain milieu; and further, this same critical theory cannot be applied to works of immediately contemporary production. It is purely retrospective, and belongs solely to the historian-critic, and therefore has no universal application.

There is no substantial difference between pure criticism and the criticism of literary history. The same fundamental principles should apply to both, and any critical theory should be capable of general application. Although it is possible to disagree on a principle of criticism with Courthope, it does not mean that the "History of English

Poetry" is not an important addition to English literary history and a brilliant example of his particular method.

The history is written in a style that has an even flow that is always lucid and without artificial glaze. Except for unduly long quotations, there is an unbroken flow of narrative that leaves the reader without doubt as to the author's grasp of his subject. "The History of English Poetry," notwithstanding its limitations in scope, is without doubt an achievement of lasting value and the groundwork of the study of English poetry in relation to Western civilisation.

CHAPTER XI

SIR ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD HIS "ENGLISH DRAMA"

"THE 'CAMBRIDGE' HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE," AND OTHER HISTORIES OF THE DRAMA

Both literature and history (in their strict sense) are intimately connected with the name of Sir Adolphus William Ward (1837–1924). The University of Cambridge has contributed a very large share to modern co-operative history, and the Master of Peterhouse played a very important part in these productions, particularly in the "Cambridge History of English Literature." His first work was the "History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne," first published in 1875, and very much enlarged and revised in the three-volume edition of 1899. For the present purpose the later edition is used. Like other contemporary scholars, he edited many literary texts, and his critical essays and papers were published, before his death, in five volumes of "Collected Papers"; but this in passing only.

When the "English Dramatic Literature" was first published the historical literature dealing with English drama was of an ample if rather untidy nature. We may perhaps except Genest, Collier, and Fleay, but their histories all contain serious defects, and of them the only one really approaching history was untrustworthy. The scope of Ward's work covers the drama from its beginnings

to the end of the Stuarts, following on to Anne's reign with Colley Cibber and those dramatists whose work lies within the natural boundary of post-Restoration drama. Dramatic literature falls into periods that are more distinct than the stages in the development of other forms of literature. The beginnings, with the extension of symbolic ritualism and the gradual secularisation of dramatic representations, are distinct and a very national part of the subject—an elementary form of drama that altered very little until England was reached by the rising tide of the revival of letters. From thence came the introduction of classical tragedy, and a new element arises in the use of a formal stage and the appearance of the drama as a distinct form of literature. The rise of national feeling during Elizabeth's reign found a popular medium of expression in the theatre, and the history is in full swim on the high tide of the national drama with Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The closing of the theatres forms the great division between the Elizabethan drama and the introduction of an entirely fresh spirit in the theatre under the restored Stuarts. Here Ward brought his history to an end. The great bulk of the history is devoted to Elizabethan drama, which appears to me to be the least successful of the three parts. In tracing the gradual development of dramatic writing in its beginnings, Ward roamed over the whole of European literature in search of evidences of early forms of drama. No possible clue was left unconsidered, either in England or abroad, and the same applies to the history of Restoration drama. There is a splendid picture of social conditions and their possible influences. The theory of monarchial Absolutism was the order of the day, and the strong impetus given to the theatre by court favour had possibly some connection

with its possibilities as a medium of popular propaganda. In any case, the dramatists were mainly "sound men and true," and the art thrived under the royal patronage given to their plays that expressed approved theories. There is some consideration of foreign contemporary drama, and the whole account contains those necessary considerations which the Shakespearean part does not receive. Ward composed this section largely by individual treatment of dramatists. The world outside the province of letters is not considered, although from another aspect this part of the work discloses Ward's greatest qualities. He was not, in the real sense of the word, a superlatively fine critic. His best criticism is in the "Collected Papers," where there were none of the restrictions that history (to a certain extent) places on criticism. In the "Dramatic Literature" his method consisted largely in the analysis of dramatic plots and the placing of dramatists into a definite position in the literary scheme. The qualities he displayed were a wonderful sense of balance and restraint. As an example, his section on Shakespeare may be considered. By the latter part of the nineteenth century Shakespearean literature had achieved huge dimensions. There existed a mass of material from which the historian had to choose the essential facts, and in this Ward's strongest qualities came into force. His account of Shakespeare's life and work in the "Dramatic Literature" contains nothing that is not literary history in the strictest sense of the term. He dismissed all arguments and most conjecture. There is the biography of the dramatist, the plays and the possible order of their being written, and, lastly, critical considerations. Ward's rejection of the more debatable part of Shakespearean study and the grouping and summarising of evidence in a restricted space

displayed the quality of judicious balance that marks his historical work. The style is somewhat flat and dry, and the continuous unfolding of dramatic plots becomes at times wearisome reading. His essays show that this was not a general feature of his writing, and it must always be remembered that the presentation of a continuous succession of material written towards the same end contains in itself a very distinct limitation. Since the beginning of the present century dramatic literature has received a great deal of attention. In one case the thread has been picked up where Ward dropped it, but this will be returned to after the consideration of his other contribution to the history of English literature.

Co-operative history, it has been seen, appeared first about the year 1890. At that period it consisted in a group of writers sharing the work of national history, arranging the division of labour by each historian undertaking a certain special period. This was a comparatively simple matter. The process developed, and when Sir Adolphus Ward and Professor A. R. Waller laid down the lines of a great history of English literature, they specialised still further and arranged for the material to be written by historians who were specially acquainted with particular aspects of each period of literature. Ward's and Waller's history appeared between the years 1907–1916 in fourteen volumes under the title of "The Cambridge History of English Literature." The whole body of the subject was divided into certain units that were either the consideration of one particular writer, of a number of writers, or of the contemporary literature of a certain subject. Each separate small part was written by an acknowledged authority on that particular part of the subject. This

method of producing history by a syndicate of writers has its own particular advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages are on the side of the matter of history. This is an age of specialists, and their work in particular branches of literature has brought much fresh material to light. It is the task of the editors of co-operative history to choose their contributors with discrimination and ensure a high quality of the academic side of history. Of course, the work can be planned on a much larger scale than one writer could possibly hope to complete in a life-time, and no matter where the work ends (in the order of time) additions can always be made on the same plan. These advantages are all on the practical side of the subject. The disadvantages are to a great extent lessened or increased by the work of the editors. In the history of literature the many aspects of the subject add greater difficulties than those faced in history pure and simple. There is the great difficulty of determining the length of treatment of individual authors, the grouping of minor authors, and the gathering together of the literature of widely separated subjects. Then there is the question of chronology and literary relationships to be considered. The definition of literature laid down by the editors of the "Cambridge" in their introduction (quoted here in the introduction) was so wide and all-embracing that the difficulties of the task were increased enormously. In this lies one of the principal disadvantages of the system; a certain clumsiness of arrangement and handling of material. For example, in the last volume of the present work there is a chapter on the "Literature of Travel, 1700–1900." The need for brief treatment of travel writers has placed some of them volumes away from their own contemporaries. This is an extreme example, but

other examples could be quoted. There is a graver disadvantage in the differences of method used by the many contributors. Beyond the subject matter, there is no relation between the different parts of each volume. Each writer sees literature from his own personal point of view. That is unalterable, but, for historical purposes, it is a disadvantage.

In the " Cambridge History " the editors planned each volume to preserve a certain unity in the contents, but did not bind themselves to any hard and fast conception of literary periods. In fact, they assisted in ridding literary history of the old tags of the " Transition " period type of description. Volume I deals with the beginning to the cycles of Romance ; and the joint editor, A. R. Waller, contributed to the first article. The difficulties of co-operative history and its failings are particularly evident here. Each contribution in itself is good but they do not hang together. This early literature is very varied in nature and language, and to give it adequate treatment on this plan would be perhaps impossible. Further, this volume appears disjointed, mainly from the lack of a general survey of literature before Langland. W. Lewis Jones on the Latin chronicles and Arthurian legends contributed good accounts of these particular subjects, also Henry Bradley on " Changes in the Language to the Days of Chaucer." The succeeding volume, carrying the history to the end of the Middle Ages, is more successful. It is devoted to Langland, Chaucer, and the English and Scotch Chaucerians—Professor Saintsbury writing on Chaucer and his English followers and Professor Gregory Smith following him with an account of the Scotch side of Chaucerian poetry. The material, being of a much more homogeneous nature, assisted to make this a more straight-

forward volume, particularly when compared with the following volume, " Renaissance and Reformation." Both Volume III and Volume IV deal with the same period, but the former volume attempts to link up the diverse character of the factors that produced the " Renaissance and Reformation." The companion volume deals with the fruits of these two great movements in the purely literary side of early Elizabethan literature. The drama is excluded entirely for later treatment, and there is some consideration of outside influences with the beginning of printing and bookselling, the early travellers, etc. Professor Courthope's " Spenser " and Cunliffe's " Mirrour for Magistrates " are good things, and Professor Sorley commenced his work on the English philosophers which he was to continue throughout the work. There is a large displacement of chronological sequence in grouping the whole of the early drama with Shakespearean drama, but there is a certain gain in the consideration of the rise of drama up to Shakespeare and his contemporaries in a continuous narrative. These two volumes dealing with the drama are composed of separate accounts of individual dramatists by what may be termed a biographical method. The Shakespeare article by Professor Saintsbury adequately fulfils a difficult task, and Arthur Symons on Middleton and Rowley, with A. H. Thorndike on Jonson, are among the fine individual studies of dramatists. Harold Child's article on the Elizabethan theatre is an essential part of the volumes, but, again, these volumes lack a general view of Elizabethan drama. It is impossible to get a clear perspective view of the period, a point which will be returned to in general considerations. " Cavalier and Puritan " is the heading which covers Volume VII, and it is really a leading up to the following volume which

covers the age of Dryden. The first of these two is a little cramped in parts, particularly when J. E. Spingarn attempts to cover Jacobean and Caroline criticism in one contribution. Much of the volume was written by Professor Saintsbury, Sir Adolphus Ward continuing his account of historical and political writers of which he contributes throughout the history. The age of Dryden is the better volume of the two. It is a pity that the drama of the time was considered in three contributions by Professor Schelling, C. Whibley, and A. T. Bartholomew. But as such it gives a very good general view of Restoration drama, and includes the stir caused by Rymer's and Collier's criticisms. In this aspect the method is better than that adopted for the Elizabethans. "From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift" (Volume IX) shows the editor's independence in marking the boundaries of a literary period. As in the "Cavalier and Puritan" volume, the promise of adequate treatment of minor authors is amply carried out, in the first case by Professor Saintsbury and in the second by the same authority in collaboration with Thomas Seccombe. This is one of the great points of the history, that minors were adequately treated and in some cases they were mentioned for the first time in a history of English literature. The succeeding volume deals with the age of Johnson and covers the perfection of the novel as a literary form. L. Cazamian, H. Child, and C. E. Vaughan in different articles deal with Richardson, Fielding and Smollett, and Sterne. Yet again, the reader is left without any aspect of the growth of the novel from Lodge and Nash (or earlier signs) and its gradual perfection into a new literary form. Part of this volume should at least give a definite lead to the succeeding volume, which deals with the romantic revival termed

by the editors "The Period of the French Revolution." Volume X accomplished this with a fine article by Professor Ker on "The Literary Influence of the Middle Ages," but it is so curiously placed in this volume that its full significance in relation to the following matter is quite lost. In the mass of writings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (a great deal of which is not imaginative at all) the term "Romantic Revival" would possibly be inapplicable, but owing to the grouping of the material in the "Age of Johnson" volume there is no significant lead up to the French Revolutionary period. Further, although Professor Emile Legouis on Wordsworth, C. E. Vaughan on Coleridge, and Professor Saintsbury on Southey are fine criticisms, the literary relation of the poets to each other is not considered, nor their work considered as a whole. The final three volumes deal with the nineteenth century, although part of the last volume is given up to colonial literature. What has been said about the last volume, regarding the general aspect, applies in the same way to these three. The period commences with individual studies of Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, but reverts again to the eighteenth century with a chapter on a group of minor poets. Of course, this is a comparatively short period of time, and is treated very fully. The editors have preserved mainly the order of time within the century, and thus we have two distinct groups of poets, critics and novelists. With the poets, there are the Byron-Shelley group, followed by the critics Landor and Hazlitt and the novelist Jane Austen. Then come the philosophers, historians, etc., and then Tennyson, Browning, etc., followed by Dickens and Thackeray, etc. This century is perhaps better linked up together than any other period. Professor Grierson on the Tennysons and Sir Henry Jones

on the Brownings, Professor Ward's continuation of the historians, and Harold Child on nineteenth-century drama are among some very fine contributions. A great deal of miscellaneous material is added to the end of the work, but the editors promised a complete consideration of every branch of literary activity, and the unimportance of a great deal of it has involved brief treatment with a loss of chronological position and a disjointed effect. These are a few disjointed remarks on a work that defies criticism. It could perhaps be done by dissecting each volume and dealing individually with its contributors, or by following up the work of those writers who have dealt throughout with one particular branch of literature. Ward dealt entirely with the historians, W. H. Hutton, the divines; the political writers were entirely chronicled by C. W. Previté-Orton, whilst Professor Saintsbury (among a host of other things) dealt with English prosody entirely. W. R. Sorley was the historian for the philosophers, and Scottish literature was dealt with by T. F. Henderson; Harold Child on the theatre and the novel, and J. W. Adamson on Education are important bodies of work in themselves apart from the general history. It would be possible to form some definite critical ideas concerning these writers, but there remain the others, and the history as a whole is the important aspect.

Before the first years of the present century no history of a national literature had been written that gave a *complete* survey of the subject. By that is meant an inclusion of everything that *might* be termed literature, an exploration of the many bypaths that lead off from the main road. Such a work can only be accomplished once, and neither is it necessary, provided that it is well executed, that it should be written again. The absolute need of a

history of the national literature, that should cover every possible ground and every writer entitled to the smallest consideration, cannot be denied.

The "Cambridge" history has fulfilled this in most respects. Its limitations are those of the system of syndicate history. There are no synoptic views, no picture of the mode, no consideration of the factors of the social life and economic forces. The editors in their final words stated that any attempt to do so must be unsatisfactory. To do so thoroughly is probably impossible, but the general consideration of social life gives a perspective view of the time in which the authors wrote and the conditions which affected the common life as a whole. On the other hand, as touching the movements of the intellectual life every endeavour has been made to render it complete; not necessarily connecting it with the contemporary literature, but leaving it as it stands for its own sake. This is the principal feature—that the history is composed of contributions of a very highly specialised nature, some of them very fine criticism, some of them also very fine writing. It is absolutely thorough, and for the first time a complete history of English literature has been expertly written in every part. The editors attempted by their arrangement to mould these parts into a cohesive whole. For them to succeed perfectly is, I think, by nature of the system impossible. The material is there but it does not make a complete pattern. What the "Cambridge" history really stands for is a work of reference which may be relied upon for historical and critical material of any part or period of English literature. Neither must the bibliographies attached to each chapter pass without mention. They are most valuable for their lists of reliable texts of English literature. And they are

an indispensable corollary of any work that aims at such a complete survey as this and add to it a great value for consulting purposes.

Since the work of Sir Adolphus Ward the drama has continued to attract the attention of the literary historian. Principal among these modern historians of the drama is Professor Allardyce Nicoll (1894), Professor of English at London University. His work has continued the history of the drama where Ward left off, and further, he has surveyed the whole of the English drama in one narrative from the beginnings to 1925. Professor Nicoll's first work dealt with dramatic theory, which does not come within the definition of literary history. But this preoccupation with the technical side of the dramatic representation has influenced his histories to an important extent. "A History of Restoration Drama, 1660–1700," appeared in 1923, and was continued in 1925 with "A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama," and the trilogy of volumes completed in 1927 with "A History of Eighteenth Century Drama." Also in 1925 the author published "The British Drama; an historical survey from the beginnings to the present time." The last is the most important of the three, attempting as it does to survey English drama from the "Tropes and Liturgical Plays" to "J. M. Synge and the Irish School." The aim of Professor Nicoll in writing this history (on a comparatively small scale) was not a detailed account of the English dramatists. Neither, in fact, does it deal exhaustively with the greatest names in the English drama. It is an attempt to view the gradual development of this certain literary form, through plays that have a special significance in the gradual unfolding of the drama. English drama is introduced by a brief

survey of the Greek and Latin stage, mainly to define what is meant by dramatic representations and to outline the limitations imposed on the dramatists by the theatre in its practical aspect. Having fixed these starting points, Professor Nicoll swings along the boughs of the dramatic forest with a very special style of his own. The previous historians of the English drama (including Ward) had identified their subject with the growth of literature as a whole. They had seen in their subject the development of a further form of literary expression and judged it from a purely literary standpoint; not so the present writer. Professor Nicoll views the drama from the point of view of the theatre and the growth of playwriting within the limitation of the proscenium arch. The drama is classified, not under the usual literary groups of pre-Shakespeareans, Shakespeareans, Restoration dramatists, etc., but as "Romantic comedy, romantic tragic comedy, realistic comedy, the revenge play, the honour tragedy," etc. This raises a most important point. Does the historical critic see the drama as literature in the widest sense of the term, or does he view it as written purely and solely for dramatic representation? Which is the important aspect? Is it the entire dramatic work of a writer or individual plays which may be labelled under a minute classification of dramatic forms? What is the important aspect of a play, its subject or its object? This classification of drama under the subject of the play (as the motive of revenge or honour) is seeing the drama as a gradual development of forms and particular themes. After all, the subject of a play is not by any means its only important part. Professor Nicoll's work in that aspect loses a certain value, that the work of dramatists are not regarded as a whole. In losing this value, it

achieves an entirely fresh one. For the first time in dramatic history the drama has been viewed from the point of view of the theatre; has been judged, not so much by purely literary comparisons as by the position a play occupies in the theatre. From this standpoint these histories gain a certain vividness which is not apparent in Ward.

The "History of Restoration Drama" and "Eighteenth Century Drama" cover a period of one hundred and sixty years, from 1660–1830. They are extremely close studies of the dramatic output of those fruitful years, and in them a good deal of little known material is brought to light. These volumes contain, moreover, the first serious attempt at a bibliography of Restoration drama, which the author states is to be embodied in a separate work on a more complete scale. The same method is used as in the "British Drama," and what has been said in that direction applies to these volumes also. The critical value of Professor Nicoll's work is difficult to estimate. The fresh attitude, the system of classification and preoccupation with dramatic theory has almost eliminated criticism. Certainly there is no attempt at comparative criticism, and the author does not go beyond examining a play in regard to some fresh aspect of dramatic representation. No profitable comparison can be made between Ward and Professor Nicoll. They are poles apart in their attitude towards the drama; Ward belongs to the study and Professor Nicoll (despite the "Professor") belongs to the theatre. Which of the two is the better treatment for literary history is difficult to say. Personally, I find Professor Nicoll's arrangement, for historical purposes, bewildering. One fact must be borne in mind—the English drama was considered from its beginnings to our own time at a single stretch. As we have seen, this is a fresh achievement.

CHAPTER XII

PROFESSOR OLIVER ELTON, ARTHUR COMPTON RICKETT, AND HISTORIANS OF THE NOVEL

In grouping historians together by the subject of their work, a break has been made in the order of time. These now under consideration belong to an earlier date than Professor Nicoll.

The "Survey of English Literature, 1780–1830" and "1830–1880," by Oliver Elton, is literary history with a difference. He intended this work to be a purely critical survey emphasising that aspect in preference to the historical. Yet, the consideration of a long period of literature must partake of the nature of history, and with Elton's particular method in view it is interesting to see how far it can be tried. The author says in the introduction that this survey "contains matter for the historian, and his point of view has been kept in view throughout the arrangement of the theme. But the historical aspect is meant to be subordinate." . . . The planning of the theme centres itself on studies of certain individual authors. Further, the objective facts of literary history are ignored. The great dividing factor between the "Survey" and literary history is in its "direct" criticism. "For one thing, to judge what he [Byron] wrote," the author says, "and even how he wrote, we must know what was in his mind when he wrote, and that only his biography can tell us" (Vol. I., p. 159). That sums up, in the author's own

words, his method of criticism, which reminds us at once of St Beuve's dictum in the matter. It is the approach to literature through the medium of the writer. Biography certainly contains evidence of a writer's mental state; from personal utterances, from letters and correspondence, private diaries, any of the written matter of autobiography. But ideas built on this material are a matter of psychology; applying to the man and after that to his writings. Now, it is impossible to treat the general aspect of literary history with long individual studies, and there must be some proportion in length of treatment. In the case of the "Survey," how can one treat those "Other writers" with this method in view? This is the weakness of Professor Elton's method. It is a contradiction in terms to survey a long period of literature and at the same time attempt to subordinate the historical aspect to this method of criticism. A consideration of developments in literature cannot be successfully accomplished by pointing to the particular characteristics of certain prominent writers. Professor Elton's studies in the "Survey" are, in themselves and in their own way, very brilliant. Their fluent natural style gives an added pleasure to the reader, and we can see that the author cares a great deal for his chosen writers. He shows a fine comprehension of "What is good" and this is his justification of the "Faith that was in me."

"The Augustan Ages" (1899) was a volume contributed to Professor Saintsbury's "Periods of European Literature." It is more genuine history than his later work, but as a contribution to a series, its scope and method rested very largely with the editor. His share in this co-operative history of the literature of Europe is dealt with under the editor's name.

The study of social life has gradually grown in importance during the last twenty years and has naturally had some bearing on the historical study of literature. Its importance as a factor in this study was touched on very early in this thesis and the great example of its success is in Courthope. Courthope saw the social life in its very broadest aspect of economic condition and the general trend of the social life. There is a different treatment in "A History of English Literature" (1918) by Arthur Compton Rickett. Previously the author had broached the subject under the same title, with a very slight sketch which he published in 1908, and enlarged into "A Primer of English Literature" in 1925. The larger and more important work is dealt with here. It was written on the assumption that "Any record of [a nation's] literature must disclose some pulsings of its social life." The history is thus limned against the background of social conditions and contemporary manners and customs. The division of the material is made over very broad general headings, on very much the same lines as Courthope's division of English poetry.

Thus far, this history of English literature is excellent. Part of the method, however, was to make matters very plain to inexperienced readers. Further, as a critic, Mr Compton Rickett is more interested in what a writer had to say and is somewhat concerned with his "message." Thus we find subject headings affixed to the different aspects of an author's work.

In the Ruskin account the writer divides up certain aspects of Ruskin's work, and deals with him—his life; his work; Ruskin as an art critic; Ruskin as a critic of society; Ruskin and the position of women; the sum

and substance of Ruskin's teaching. This method is pursued throughout the whole of the history, and although it offers certain practical advantages for history, it is rather too systematic and presumes on the acceptance of certain definitions of a writer's qualities.

Courthope has been mentioned in connection with this historian, but the comparison does not go far. When Courthope spoke of the forces of the social life, he had in his mind the general drift of European and national life and of the great social forces of history. With Mr Compton Rickett this interest in social life takes the narrower view of the examination of domestic conditions, manners, customs, dress and costume, the picture of the mode—in a word, the external aspects of everyday life.

A much closer comparison could be made with a French historian, J. J. Jusserand, who in his " Literary History of the English People " and " English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare " wrote a history of the English people by their literature. Monsieur Jusserand interprets literature through a certain *milieu*, but with a frank intention and without attempting to fit in any arbitrary method of criticism. He has concerned himself with the external aspects of social life, and in this regard Mr Compton Rickett resembles him more closely than the historian of English poetry. This " History of English Literature " is most interesting in viewing the different ways by which historians have approached the subject, particularly as it is intended to form some guidance to a reader approaching the same subject for the first time.

Modern Historians of the Novel

The English novel has not attracted the attention of historians to the same extent as other kinds of literature. It was the latest development in English writing, as a fresh form of expression, and the first burst of popularity for novel writing came after the age of formal criticism. This may account for the fact that there is no working definition of the novel upon which historians agree. Dunlop, in his "History of European Fiction," included the prose romances and the classic and Italian stories. Professor Raleigh's "English Novel" (1894) commenced with the medieval romance and ended with Scott because he considered that after Scott the novel lost its distinct character as a story. David Masson's "British Novelists and their Styles" (1859) commenced with Richardson, and the only history of the English novel which covers both extremes was published in 1913 by Professor Saintsbury. So we have this small body of work of a very uneven and incomplete nature; all written without a common definition of the subject. The whole point is raised again by the appearance of the first volume of Dr Ernest Baker's "History of the English Novel" (1924) which appears to be the beginning of an exhaustive history of the English novel, the first to be written. The author states his working formula to be "The interpretation of human life by means of fictitious narratives in prose." Now, this first volume does not take the subject beyond its earliest beginnings in romance, and here particularly one may see the difficulty of a definition. When following up a particular story in the history of romance, Dr Baker is obliged to take up forms of the story which

are not in prose, but which contain a variation of a story that has appeared in prose form. The novel is certainly fictitious narrative but conforming to a certain form. This first volume is a very elaborate account of narrative writing and will lead up to the full purpose of the history of the novel. Until that happens, criticism must be silent. From the projected plan it should cover the whole ground of the subject and fill an important gap in the scheme of English literary history.

Doctor Baker assisted very largely in the editing of a co-operative history of English literature, which was published in 1923 under the editorship of John Buchan. The very large amount of the material for the history, contributed by the author himself, deals mainly with early English literature. It is a very compact history, and planned on the usual lines of this kind of co-operative work.

To return to the English novel, Harold Williams is the author of several works dealing with English literature, one of which, "Two Centuries of the English Novel," covers the ground from the appearance of the novel as a definite literary form. It is the least successful of his books, mainly owing to his attempt to ignore the historical element and deal with the subject critically. Much more successful is the same writer's "Modern English Writers, 1890–1914" (1918), of which "Outlines of Modern English Literature" (1920) is more or less an epitome. To attempt a history of literature that has but recently been written sounds a paradox, but as a guide to the literary events of the last thirty years it has some importance. There is a defect in the general outline of the work, because the different forms of literature are considered separately, and it does not show clearly the general trend of development.

This in itself must be admitted as an almost insuperable difficulty. We are too near, too close, to these recent events to see them with any sense of perspective, particularly in regard to the literature of the last twenty years. This may be seen in reading some of the criticism contained in this history which was written (but not published) in 1914. As an example, Stephen Phillips may be mentioned. He was a poet who was received with rapture by most critics on the first appearance of his plays, which certainly looked like a revival of the poetic drama. Those first judgments are largely repeated in Mr Williams' history. Time, however, has winnowed the grain from the chaff and now we see that, after all, there was more chaff than grain. This does not mean that it is impossible to write a history of modern literature, but it must be, in the nature of the case, tentative. Mr Williams has made an exhaustive study of modern writers, some of whom will drop out of literary history in the future, but of whom, and of modern literature generally, it is necessary to have some record.

CHAPTER XIII

THE POPULAR HISTORY

THE popular history is an attempt to present in an elementary form the principal events of literary history. The word itself may be used in the sense of something inferior. In some cases this may be true, but the popular history has produced some genuine contributions to the subject, and to criticism also. Stopford Brooke's "English Literature" (1880) was among the first of the popular histories of English literature and it remains practically the best. It is a more interesting work than other books of a specialised nature that Brooke contributed to the subject, and since its publication this branch of literary history has increased very rapidly. Some of it is quite valueless, part of it serving the purely practical purpose of conveying information. That in itself is not by any means to be regarded as fulfilling even, in a very limited way, the function of literary history. Among the more successful attempts at writing popular history may be mentioned H. S. Pancoast's "Introduction to English Literature" (1901), "English Literature" (1910) by F. Rahtz, "English Literature" (1896) by W. F. Collier, and H. E. Marshall's "Child's History of English Literature" (1909). The last-named is a particularly delightful book, and apart from the fact that it claims to be for children it is a very good popular history. A method, which tends to defeat its own purpose, is used by Amy Cruse in her "English Literature through the Ages" (1911). Her plan is to tell "The story of English literature

through the story of individual books." This is hardly feasible, although some idea of the progress of literature could be seen were these individual books treated and selected as the culminating point of distinct movements. In any case it would be necessary to give some connecting thread. Miss Cruse sees her particular books as individuals, giving some indication of prevailing thought and a picture of the times. In selecting these "typical" books the authoress showed some independence of judgment and some appreciation of the difficulties of the task. In that regard the book has its merits, but as a popular introduction to English literature it is an *extreme* simplication of material and detail.

In 1911 appeared two books which were written for a popular series of handbooks (The Home University Library): one by Professor W. P. Ker, "English Literature, Medieval," and the other, "Modern English Literature," by G. H. Mair. Together they form a connected account of English literature. Professor Ker has been mentioned before for his contribution to the "Periods of European Literature." Medieval literature was his particular field of work, and he wrote a considerable amount on its various aspects. With the present work the attention is given to purely English medieval literature. The method of both these books is to give a very broad outline, and to ignore anything in the nature of purely objective facts. Professor Ker divides his material by the forms in which they were written, except in the case of the romances, which are treated in a manner designed to display the growth of a particular story. This very broad treatment makes a clear history of a very involved and very difficult period. The author's great learning never forms a weight to the light handling needed for this sort

of popular writing, and a quotation from his account of Beowulf shows how lightheartedly he faces his subject. "Beowulf himself, the hero, is a champion and slayer of monsters. He hears that the King of the Danes is plagued in his house by an ogre. . . . He goes on a visit to Denmark, sits up for the ogre, fights with him and mortally wounds him. That does not end the business, for the ogre's mother comes to revenge her son, and Beowulf has a second fight and kills her too, and is thanked and goes home again."

Mr Mair has gone differently to work and arranged his material on more general lines in chronological order. He gives a good general view of English literary development, but has not those wilful fancies which make the first part of these histories more exhilarating reading. The criticism of the "Modern English Literature" is not particularly distinguished, although the matter of the work is well handled. Considered as a joint work, there are few better popular histories of the national literature.

"A Popular History of English Poetry" (1924) by T. Earle Welby follows a similar method to the last-named books. He has thrown over entirely the use of technical terms and ignored dates and the other ordinary facts of history. He keeps entirely to the broad track of English poetry, but the governing features in the history of English poetry are so well handled in relation to the general history of our literature, that this popular work is not a series of stepping-stones but a very fine bridge. Even at this late date Mr Welby follows Courthope in arguing that English poetry does not descend from Anglo-Saxon at all. He says (and this is a typical passage), "You will note that it differs from comparatively modern English poetry in form, having indeed an altogether different prosody, the basis of which

is alliteration. You will note that it differs from all modern English poetry in the mythology that it uses, except where that is Christian. And finally you will note that it differs in spirit, being tribal rather than national and shut off from the general stream of European culture." These are arguments placed in a lucid and a very simple way. Further, they are very convincing in their line of thought, and offer no difficulties to a student studying English poetry for the first time. There is another point about Mr Earle's criticism and that is, he is never bound down by the weight of tradition. Certain poets appear in history as exercising a vital influence on their generation. Mr Welby agrees with this, but he has original ideas on the argument of whom these poets were. Also, he has read poetry with a very sensitive and lively imagination, and his quotations have a charming freshness about them. One may disagree, but this is part of the power exercised by any stimulating book.

This concludes an attempt to follow up a special and important part of historical writing, which, it has been emphasised, is also an important part of criticism. These are two functions, history and criticism, which for literary history must meet each other and serve one purpose. Neither the purpose of criticism nor the purpose of history can adequately be served unless they form part of each other. In what direction this art will develop in the future, it is hard to say. At present the tendency to specialise on extreme points represents a certain danger for literary studies generally. A particular part of this subject should only be studied in relation to the whole, and the limiting of attention to certain narrow boundaries is dangerous and on occasions absurd.

The needs of literary history are in the opposite direction and it must work for the end of broadening the literary

horizon, until we see that the study of literature does not end with England but only commences there. In this direction the importance of comparative literature and its very steady growth (now assisted by a periodical devoted solely to that purpose) is helping to achieve this frame of mind. It is the most desirable form of specialised literary studies.

As to the history of English literature, the main facts of the subject are now mainly complete. Something is lacking, and I think a history written in the same way as Buckle's "Civilisation in England" would fill a large gap. The principal facts are established, and have received full attention at the hands of historians. It should be possible to write a history of English literature from a purely philosophic standpoint where the movements of the national literature are shown in relation to western literature and western culture generally. It is very difficult to show what exactly is meant by this, but what Buckle did for English history might be done for English literature. The result could not fail to be of great importance, and again we are back at the ideal of a federal literature and a complete recognition of the continuity of letters.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RESULTS IN THE PRACTICE OF CRITICISM

It was laid down at the beginning of this thesis that literary history was a part of literary criticism, and that "Without literary history, literary criticism was impossible." Literary history is now completely established in England, and the question is—Has it played any part in forming modern criticism? Has criticism as an art shown any growth or improvement in ideas since Warton? This account has shown that Warton stands in a very isolated position and Hallam, his nearest neighbour, is seventy years off. Partly for this reason, and partly for the defects which were part of the writers themselves, their work left little impression on contemporary criticism; Hallam much less than Warton. If Carlyle had continued to write the criticism of his early literary essays, and had written literary history on the notions he expressed in the essay on Taylor's "Early German Poetry," Victorian criticism might not have been the valley of dry bones that it was.

The years Carlyle spent at Craigenputtock were his best. At that time he regarded literature with great sincerity and it appealed to him as being wholly admirable. Judging from the early essays he had the power to be a dominant influence on critical writing. His ideas changed, and thirty and more years later Carlyle warned the students of Edinburgh University of the dangers attached to a too devoted following of the muse.

Criticism continued to move in other directions. Arnold, thirty-five years later, pleaded that it should at *least* be disinterested. That, unless it kept aloof from "Any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, it was being false to its own nature." He cannot be termed unjust or over emphatic if the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* are an index to the criticism of his contemporaries. Their files for these years can be opened at random and critiques read that fill one with a sort of cold horror; written, moreover, concerning books like "Jane Eyre" which now occupy a permanent place in the national literature. These critics did not descend to using common sense, and without saying that the book was necessarily bad literature, condemned it hopelessly.

Critical writing was not confined to the literary journals, but the great test of a critic lies in the judgment he forms on an entirely new work. There were signs that other opinions were held at the time, and the most articulate of them was written by E. S. Dallas in a work entitled "The Gay Science" (1866). Actually this consists of certain ideas taken from psychology and applied to the æsthetic study of poetry and the sensation of pleasure it induces in the mind. The first part, however, deals with the principles of criticism by the comparative method. He says, "At present, so far from there being in existence anything which can bear the name of comparative criticism, there is no attempt to produce it, and the very need of it is scarcely acknowledged." And later, "It is only from comparative criticism that we can accept science, but hitherto criticism has been very much lost in details, and has never attempted comparison on a large scale." So far so good, but in his definitions Dallas loses his hold on the theory. "The comparison required is threefold:

the first . . . a comparison of all the arts one with another . . . the next psychological, a comparison of these in their different phases with the nature of the mind, its intellectual bias, and its ethical needs as revealed in the latest analysis ; the third, historical, a comparison of the results thus obtained with the facts of history, the influence of race, of religion, of climate, in one word the story of human development." This is a formal pronouncement in favour of the theory, nothing more. The writer stumbled over his preoccupations with æsthetics and psychology (he was a student at Edinburgh under Sir William Hamilton). The germ of the idea is admitted, and that is as far as the "Gay Science" goes with the comparative theory. The last part of his dictum dealing with race and climate was most likely taken from Taine and is a certain confusion of ideas.

It is not assumed that comparison is something new in critical theory. The germ of it is in most theories, and it has certainly existed in England since Dryden, but in a very unformulated and inarticulate way. The advent of literary history made the final perfecting of the method possible. It has been seen that during the years from 1870–1890 literary history became popular and its importance and possibilities realised. After 1890 the historian adopted a less uncertain note about his science and definitions appear concerning the relationship between history and criticism. This activity coincided largely with the æsthetic revolt of the nineties, a movement which did not regard the historical study of literature as having any importance. I do not intend to examine the particular theories which the followers of this movement professed. The cause of its rise lies in the state of art which was glimpsed when discussing early Victorian criticism. The

movement had considerable influence at the time, but with the exception of Mr Arthur Symons, modern criticism showed few signs of æsthetic theories. To-day it is no more than a passage of history without forgetting, however, that in the nineties modern literature was founded and a break made with a decayed tradition.

During the same period (in the year 1890) Professor Saintsbury published his "Essays in English Literature." These essays, it must be remembered, are among his earliest work, and were written before he had commenced to chronicle English literature. In the introductory essay he says that the test question regarding criticism should be, "How far has he (the critic) attempted to place and succeeded in placing the subject, in the general history of literature in the particular history of its own language, in the collection of authors in its own department. How far, in short, has he applied what I may perhaps be excused for calling the comparative method in literature to this particular instance." The essay which forms the source of this quotation is a very definite pronouncement in favour of comparison; more definite than any preceding one, and (as far as I am aware) its first formal definition.

Side by side with the æstheticism of Pater and Symonds and the comparisons of Professor Saintsbury was a further method of criticism which has already been touched on in the Introduction. From a literary source, this was owing to the impression made by Taine's history, and from a scientific source, from the great interest aroused by the work of Herbert Spencer. Its influence in England was never a very strong one, and when formal pronouncements came from English critics they came from those whose work does not by any means show the logical

application of the theory. Sir Edmund Gosse declared himself in its favour in his book entitled " Modern English Literature," which was quoted earlier in this thesis. Later pronouncements have shown that he did not visualise the scientific theory in the same way as Émile Hennequin and Georges Renard. Gosse views literature as one great living organism, constantly evolving and changing its forms. In 1922, when addressing the English Association on the "Continuity of Literature," he said, "What criticism has to do in the historical sphere is to take in the whole field of poetry and prose from the earliest times and discover where the particular object of its attention fits into the prodigious scheme."

The reason for this slight examination of late Victorian criticism (apart from the fact that Gosse and Saintsbury also belong to modern criticism) is to point out how during this time there was a great activity in this department of literature, Professor Saintsbury, Sir Edmund Gosse, Pater, and Symonds all representing some special aspect of critical theory, and formulating theories and methods concerning criticism. At this time æsthetic theories had probably the greatest amount of attention. Much less attention was paid to the theories that had a scientific basis, and then only in regarding literature as a development of life—as a living organism which evolves in the same manner as natural phenomena. There was no attempt to regard literature through a certain *milieu* of race, civilisation, or other biological and geological aspects. It may be said that, led by Matthew Arnold, there was something in the nature of a revival in criticism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was inevitable that writers should revolt against the preoccupation with ethics, politics, and other ulterior matters that the

mid-century critics had regarded as part of the critical standpoint towards letters.

There was a distinct change in ideas and a better conception of purpose. Arnold, in fact, found so much to occupy him in attempting to put right the state of criticism that he figures more as a postulater of ideas than as a great critic himself. I do not think that the different elements in criticism appear in clear-cut forms, and it is extremely difficult to form notions on the exact position of the modern critic. There are certain predominant aspects, and from these an idea may be gathered of the general current of opinion among contemporary critics concerning the practice of their art. In a very broad way there are —the abandonment of *a priori* ideas concerning literature and the claim of absolute validity on the part of the critic. There has been a distinct move in the separation of criticism from special applications of philosophy, and some recognition of the permanent element in literature as a guiding factor in forming critical judgments. There has been some insistence too on the important doctrine of the continuity of literature. No claim is made here that this represents the drift of modern opinions entirely, but it represents an important element.

Mr Orlo Williams, in a recent book entitled "Contemporary Criticism," divides the object of his attention into several distinct compartments, calling those who are represented by the statement above "Practical Critics." I cannot see that the subject is by any means so distinct or that the critics whom he has divided into a number of groups contain such particularly distinguishing qualities. Neither does it appear that this common-sense attitude among certain critics is more "practical" than any other. Criticism, after all, has a practical end in view when passing

judgment on contemporary literary productions, and I cannot agree with those writers who see in criticism a jumping-off place for their own individuality. The critic certainly attempts to create a vision of the work under his notice, and here (apart from his judgments) he is undoubtedly creating something fresh. This does not depend on any particular philosophy, but can be arrived at by the simplest of methods. Such a thing as " vision," intangible in itself, is not a question of any method but of something much more fundamental in the critic's general make up.

The currents of literature are many and set in different directions. There never has been a time, and never will be, when literature unanimously voices one note. The same applies to criticism, and when the influence of literary history is considered one can only point to certain well-defined examples. There is a wider, more general field of influence that has been indicated previously when summing up the general trend of critical beliefs. We have a number of critics, among them Mr J. C. Squire, Mr J. B. Priestley, and possibly Virginia Woolf, who show most distinctly that history is now a factor in criticism. Mr Squire declared his faith in an article entitled " A Critic," and his main points are an insistence on those elements in literature which have formed the main prop of theoretical definitions here. It is difficult to go over them without repetition. A further critic recognises the possibility of historical criticism, but whose definition of criticism also admits the possibility of other methods. He attempts to theorise on the idea that criticism is a purely literary process in the most abstract sense of the term. The function of literary judgment, he says, is to " Work back and define the unique quality of the sensibility which

necessitated this literary expression." This was written by Mr J. Middleton Murry, and he goes on to say, "The historical or ethical critic will enlarge more on the nature of the sensibility, its value in itself and its relation to other types of sensibility. . . . He will not be a worse critic but he will be a less literary critic." ("A Criticial Credo." Countries of the mind.) Here is the bare admittance of the historical method, nothing further. Mr Murry can see different methods of criticism, all being good in themselves, but being less literary by the attention paid to the "Nature of the sensibility" and the "Means by which the sensibility was expressed." If I may quote another critic who puts the matter very plainly, "It is the part of his [the critic's] business to see literature steadily and to see it whole; and this is eminently to see it *not* as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time; to see the best work of our time and the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with the same eyes." Mr T. S. Eliot wrote this in the preface to his "Sacred Wood." It is a very clear opinion given by a most interesting man of letters who has received a good deal of criticism from those writers who only see literature when it is "consecrated by time." To return to Mr Murry's postulation—there is only one difference between the historian-critic and the critic pure and simple. The former combines two functions and for that reason has greater limitations than the latter.

Apart from the more general aspect of the subject, there has been one great achievement, and that in the particular theory of criticism with which the history of literature is connected. That is in perfecting and ordering of the comparative method. To see this let us take an example of the method in its earliest days, before even

the advent of Warton's "Poetry." Joseph Warton, brother of the historian, published an "Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope" in 1756, and added a further volume in 1772. This was assumed to be something in the nature of an examination of the whole of Pope's work. It is written at great length, but note that it was not intended as a panegyric on the recently dead poet, for Warton was an early romantic and disagreed with Pope with some degree of consistency.

To examine Warton's method—in the first place he had none. The book shambles and jogs along, without any constructive unity to bind it together. Commencing at once on Pope's writings without a glance or mention of contemporaries or of the conditions and influences that went to produce a time of "Classic" literature, Pope is seen only as an individual poet. Warton commences with the Juvenilia and goes straight ahead, forming a sort of running commentary on the poet. He belonged to the old type of learned reader. His width of reading was enormous and his taste catholic. The essay contains a multitude of learned references to poets, critics, biographies, and legends, for Warton was unable to resist dragging in a reference, no matter how obscure. Where the body of the work did not permit it he used a footnote. Yet in this there are signs of the newly awakened historical sense. In these erudite irrelevancies is the germ of the comparative method. It is unformulated and rambling, containing no consideration of English or foreign contemporaries, yet the "Essay on Pope" contains an elementary notion of the idea. This example, of no very great importance in English criticism, was chosen as showing the signs of comparison in an easily recognisable form. To have gone to Dryden would have raised other aspects

altogether, and second-rate writers often show a new drift of thought where the greater genius is indicative of the prevailing literary mode.

So much for primitive comparison, and to see what has been accomplished here I have chosen a very recent work, which stands in much the same relation to its subject as Warton's essay. Osbert Burdett's "Beardsley Period" is described by the author as "An essay in Historical Perspective." It deals with the æsthetic movement of the nineties and is sufficiently distant in time to gain a perspective view. There is a little difference in the position of the two works, for Warton was an apostle of a new doctrine and Burdett is dealing with a vein of literary thought that is no longer the mode. Modern literature has discarded the æstheticism of Wilde and Beardsley where the eighteenth century had not revolted against the Augustans during Warton's time.

Mr Burdett approached the subject through a survey of the different forces (mainly social) that produced the reaction against Victorian feeling, and the influence from France that supplied the literary motive of the movement. It is a preparation for reaching the period itself, and a recreation of the contemporary atmosphere. After this carefully built-up preliminary, the writer proceeds to deal with the individual authors of the movement. This is the placing of an author in the general history of literature and the "particular collection of authors of his own department." It is a perfection of the historical points of view and has all the clear-cut values of good perspective. It must be borne in mind that this is only in dealing with method, and that no attempt is made to go in to Warton or Burdett's criticism as such.

So far these remarks on modern criticism have narrowed

themselves to considering the aspect of a certain method, mainly because that method is a corollary of the history of literature and also because it appeals to the present writer as eminently sound and desirable. I have no intention of conveying an impression that all is well with modern criticism. That literary history has healed its wounds, that the comparative method being firmly established and perfected, matters are in a satisfactory state. Such is not the case by any means. Modern criticism contains good and sound elements, and these elements have been largely brought about by the growth of the historical sense. There are, however, many unsatisfactory and bewildering elements. It happens constantly that judgments appear on a work which are almost violent in their expression—and both judgments are directly opposed. What is the reader to make of this lack of unanimity among critics, particularly as these opposed judgments are not necessarily supported by any reasoned arguments?

A number of reasons may account for this, but two appear to be predominant. First, there is a great deal too much criticism. The publishers appear to regard it as a very good forcing ground for recent publications. Every popular daily paper has its "Literary column," which is usually written for the meanest intelligence and entirely negligible. In this I except Robert Lynd's editorship of the "Daily News" literary page. The remainder of the penny press would confer a service to letters by confining their attention to Boxing and Dog-racing. There at least their reading public demands a competent critique. The second reason is that any person with a fairly liberal education and a taste for reading appears to regard criticism as his particular preserve. A critical attitude toward letters may be sound and desirable, but amateur criticism

(I may be forgiven the term) is too frequent and incomprehensibly encouraged. It only adds to the much too large bulk of undisciplined writing.

There is another common lament with which I do not agree. At more or less regular intervals somebody complains that modern criticism is limited to saying nice things, that the biting, slashing attack of fifty years ago is no longer written. In the first place, nice things *are* said about worthless books, but that is owing to a cause that has nothing to do with literature at all. Apart from that altogether, the fact that these savage and biting criticisms are not written is a very hopeful sign. A good deal of that type of writing was concerned with the purely ethical side of the case or took on the much more practical side of party politics. The critiques were often a gross personal attack on the writer, and how hopelessly wrong they have been proved is a literary commonplace. This part of the subject is bound up with the transporting vehicle of criticism —the literary periodical.

The relations between criticism and the periodical have even grown in importance since Arnold wrote on the "Function of criticism at the present time," where he said some very hard things about the periodicals of the time. The *purely* literary periodical in England has always been a rather rare thing—meaning a periodical devoted to literature entirely and not having other interests. The older journals, like the "Edinburgh," were never devoted entirely to literature, and those devoted to criticism are rarer still. Difficulties beset such ventures from the beginning, the greatest being the need of sufficient public support. Our own time has not been entirely apathetic in this direction. Since the founding of the old "Athenæum" a number of weekly papers have been conducted that

divide their attention between politics and literature. It appears that by combining these two interests the existence of a journal is assured. Viewed as an expedient alone, this alliance has provided a vehicle for some very fine criticism. To-day we have a weekly journal devoted entirely to literary criticism in the "Literary Supplement" of the "Times," and that is something very notable and remarkable. It attempts to keep in touch with the entire literary production of this country, and with the more important productions of contemporary foreign literature. This in itself shows a change of attitude that cannot be overrated. Some of the initial faults in English criticism have been connected with an insular view of literature. It is an achievement of modern criticism that we are now observing the literary events of other countries beside our own. Apart from the purely critical journal, there is the literary journal which forms a medium for imaginative literature beside criticism. I can quote no better example than the "London Mercury," which has been edited since its inception in 1919 by Mr J. C. Squire. There are others, some founded to express some particular attitude towards letters, or to be the organ of a group of writers holding eclectic views. The periodical that has been named stands for a broad attitude towards literature, not depending on any particular creed or limiting itself to any particular form. Its attitude towards literature may be of a conservative nature, that is in regard to the more experimental side of literary expression. Yet this journal stands for a good deal in modern criticism. This may be observed—that although the modern literary periodical as an organ of criticism has still some of the faults that Arnold saw in his own journals, it is not nearly so rare as it was and that there is a genuine attempt to keep it free from ulterior

motives. Above all, English literature alone is not their only concern, and foreign literature as a whole is receiving some attention.

Viewing generally the critical writing of to-day, we observe that the literary horizon has been very much broadened: which in itself is of the greatest importance. The historical sense is present and constantly in view. Matters are not in such a bad state as in Arnold's time, and, given a clear field without interference from ulterior sources, there is hope for the criticism of the future. There is a principal end to work for—a complete alliance of Western literature and Western culture generally.

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Note.—The history of a particular literary form within a certain period is classified with that period. The period divisions themselves

are subdivided under the same arrangement as the general histories of poetry, drama, etc. For example, the section The English Renaissance reads: The English Renaissance—General, then *Poetry,* then *Drama. This is carried out fully with the exception of the first two sections, Anglo-Saxon literature and the Cycles of Romance, which are not further divided, owing to the difficulty of separating material dealing with the different literary forms within those periods. Each entry contains the place of publication except where that happens to be London.*

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